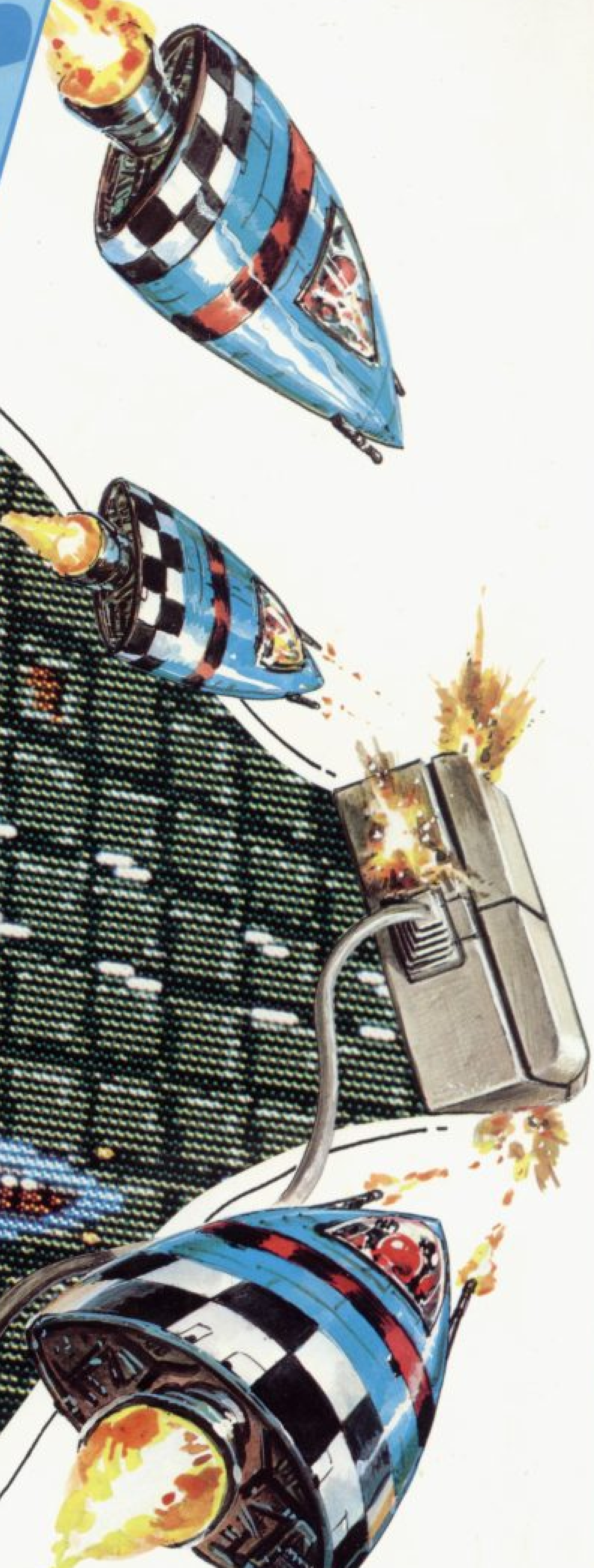
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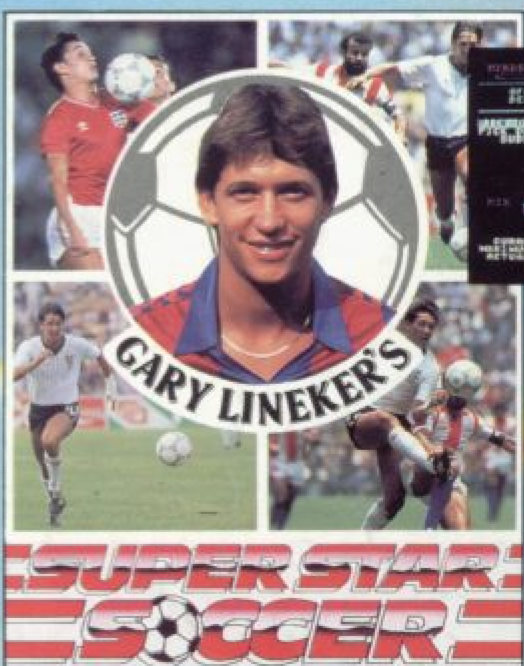
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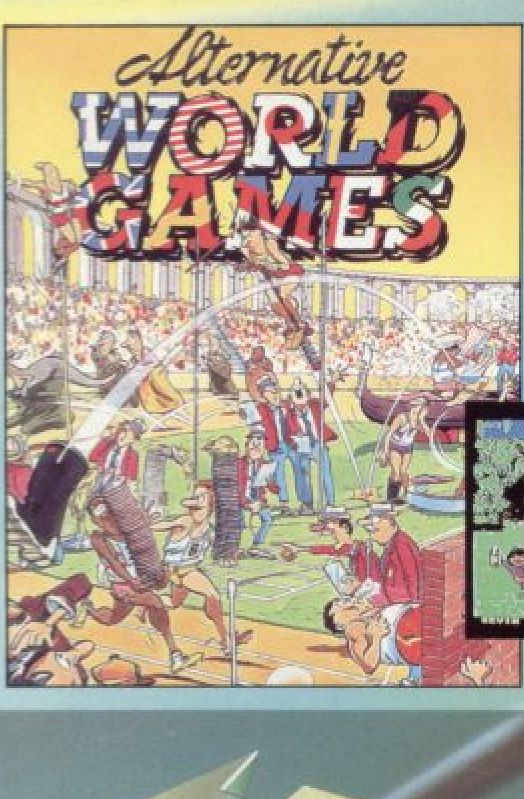
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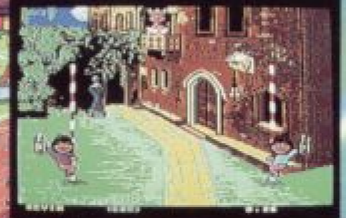
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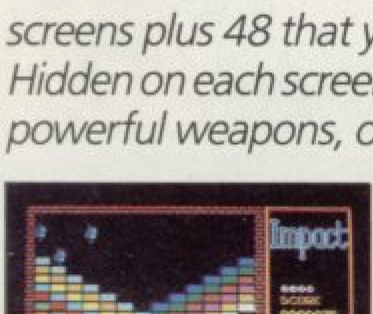
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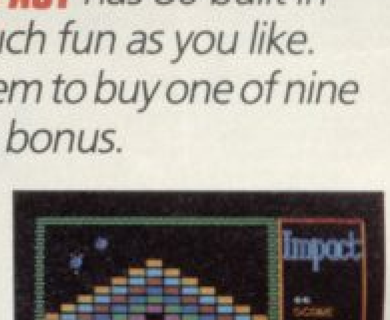
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DECEMBER 1987

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COMPETITION RULES
The Editor's decision is final in all matters relating to adjudication and while we offer prizes in good faith, believing them to be available, if something untoward happens (like a game that has been offered as a prize being scrapped) we reserve the right to substitute prizes of comparable value. We'll do our very best to despatch prizes as soon as possible after the published closing date. Winners names will appear in a later issue of THE GAMES MACHINE. No correspondence can be entered into regarding the competitions (unless we've written to you stating that you have won a prize and it doesn't turn up, in which case drop Frances Mable a line at the PO Box 10 address). No person who has any relationship, no matter how remote, to anyone who works for either Newsfield or any of the companies offering prizes, may enter one of our competitions.

ON THE COVER
The cover illustration is a composite made from an original computer generated picture designed by Steve Jarratt using *Degas Elite*. It was distorted to form the perspective shape, retouched in zoom mode before being photographed by Cameron Pound. This was then enlarged, laser scanned and composited at film planning stage with additional elements painted by Oliver Frey.

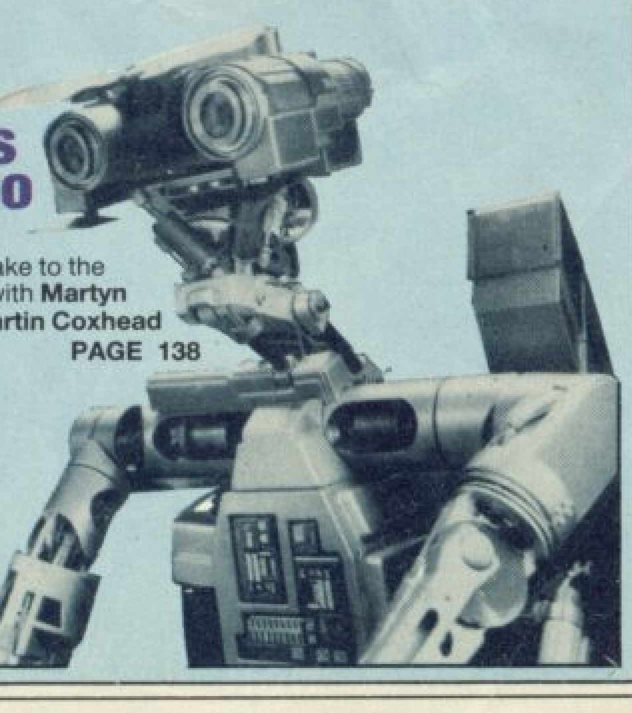
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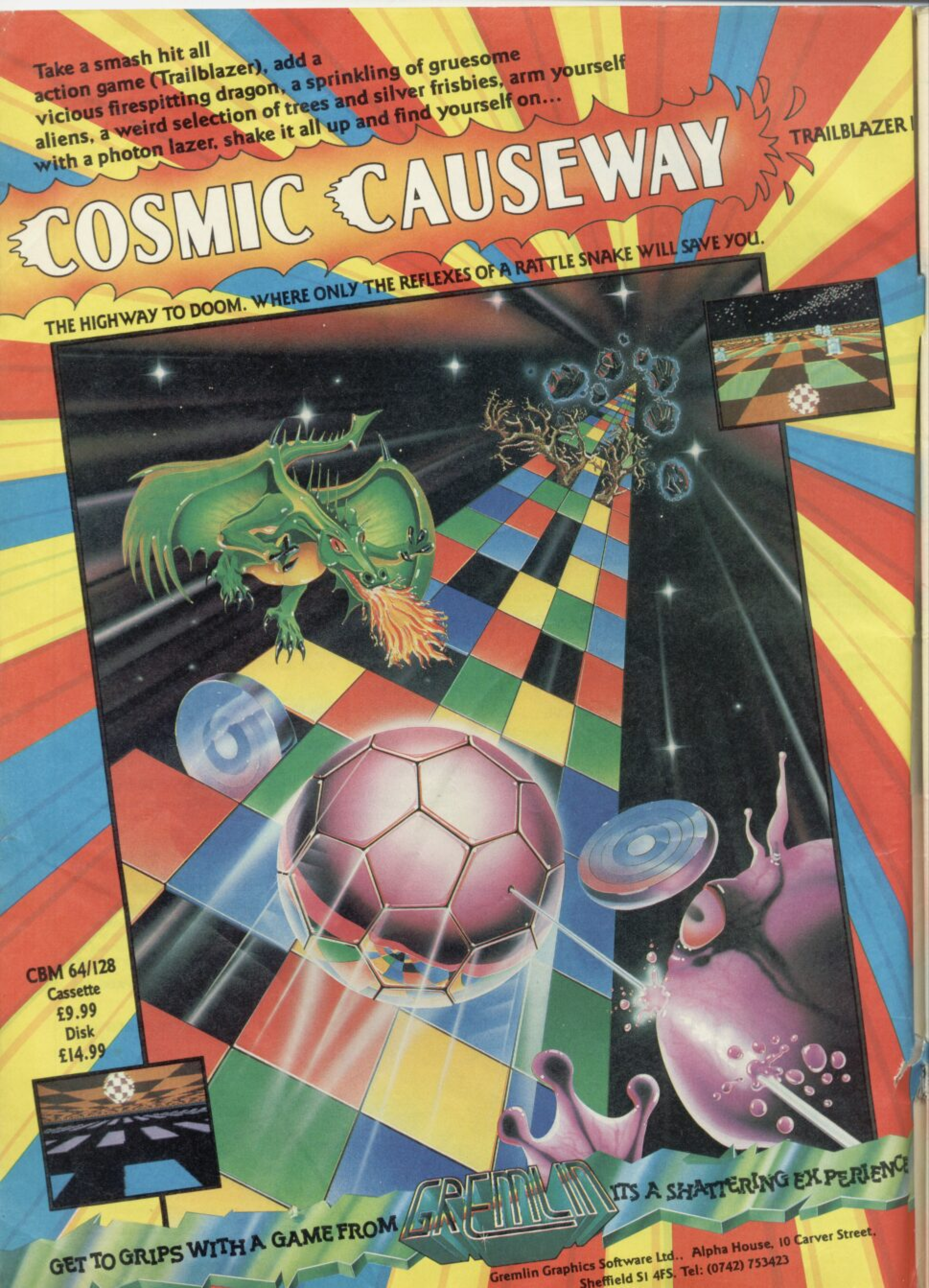
FEATURES

REGULARS

WIN!

Issue Three of THE GAMES MACHINE is on sale from 21 January – and thereafter each month.





Take a smash hit all action game (Trailblazer), add a vicious firespitting dragon, a sprinkling of gruesome aliens, a weird selection of trees and silver frisbies, arm yourself with a photon lazer, shake it all up and find yourself on...
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GOING MONTHLY

It is rather strange to be writing an editorial for a BI-MONTHLY magazine devoted to computer entertainment; computers and the games they play are so fast that the publishing trade by comparison seems tortoise-like in speed. Newsfield's other magazines are monthlies, and while they too are slow compared to dailies in reacting to news and reviews, the fact of producing a magazine that appears only every two months brings home the fact of just how fast the software world gallops on.

We have had a fair amount of trouble fitting in all the games reviews we wanted to. Given that our aim is to cover ALL (wishful thinking) software released on all formats, there is no avoiding the fact that by the time this bi-monthly issue appears on the streets most monthlies will have beaten us to it with a lot of the reviews. Our notion in the circumstances has been to shrug our shoulders and not worry about being first, but instead to concentrate on being best and most detailed about what we live and write.

THE REVIEWS

We cover all the popular 8- and 16-bit formats: Spectrum 48/128 and +3, Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64/128, Atari XL, XE and ST, Amiga, Amstrad PCW, IBM PC compatibles and games consoles. Of course games reviews are the primary concern, but unlike other multi-user magazines, THE GAMES MACHINE gives separate ratings for the different formats, because we don't believe a game is always the same on every computer. And you can be sure that NO game version is rated UNTIL IT IS THE FINISHED ARTICLE. First we review *the game* – the idea, its playability, the way the basic design is conceived – then we review the machine-specific implementation. This means that whatever computer you own, THE GAMES MACHINE reviews are applicable to you in over 90% of cases. It also means that when a specific version isn't yet released, that the other formats' review is your preview, and this frees our extensive preview section for games that really are some way off completion.

AND THE REST

If you add to that all the other areas of computer and electronic entertainment THE GAMES MACHINE wants to report about, like music applications and graphics utilities, desktop publishing and modem-linked shareware, insights into the commercial background of the industry and opinions about its present and future, plus entertainment related subjects like role-playing games and techno goodies, interactive video and satellite TV, you will understand the limitations of a magazine that only appears every other month: Keeping up with it all is less of a problem than finding space for it all!

" . . . whatever computer you own, THE GAMES MACHINE reviews are applicable to you in over 90% of cases . . . "

RESPONSE

As luck would have it, response to Issue One of THE GAMES MACHINE has been so good that as from our next appearance on 21 January in the New Year we will be going monthly. No doubt we shall still find it difficult to cram everything in, but it will give us more of a chance.

Your letters have encouraged us (with just as much criticism as praise) to prove it is possible to create a magazine that is truly reflective of what computer entertainment is about: Interaction.

The software world exists because of you, because of the software houses and the magazines that act as mirrors and voices of what is going on. THE GAMES MACHINE aims to reflect the coming of age of computer entertainment through a practical, fair and committed contribution.

Enough of speculation and prophecy – THE GAMES MACHINE is about enjoying computers, and if I carry on much longer, my editorial team and the art department will have my chips for wasting important space . . .

PRESS ANY KEY

CHILDREN IN NEED ON-LINE

MICRONET, together with PRESTEL and ITECs (Information Technology Centres), exceeded all expectations last year by raising £46,000 for the BBC Children In Need appeal.

On 27 November they will be there again, providing on-line aid for this year's appeal. Micronet will be taking eight computer terminals to BBC Television Centre – two of them actually in the studio – and they hope to stage live interviews with celebrities and conduct on-line auctions of computer products. Computer users will be able to donate money directly on-line, but by exploiting the nationwide communications network available through Prestel, ITECs all over the UK will be logged into Micronet enabling members of the general public to access on-line Children In Need. Dig deep everybody!

ADVENTURE 87

For adventure gamesters the event of the year takes place on 28 November at Sutton Central Library, Sutton, Surrey.

The event will have a similar format to last year's show with both seminars and hands-on workshops. The event area has been greatly increased over last year, and there will be presentations on the playing and creation of both single-user and multi-player computer based adventure games given by several well-known authors. For more information contact PRESTEL 81054, or **Vernon Quaintance** on **(01) 764 6556.**

BELAY THOSE ALIGNMENT BLUES

Failure to load is a common cassette problem, but poor loaders may be a thing of the past for Commodore 64 owners.

LOAD-IT has produced a datacorder which helps to decrease the number of failed loadings due to the cassette errors which we have all come to know and love. The Load-It player/recorder is fitted with a built-in head alignment knob and LED; if you are having trouble loading a piece of software into your Commodore, fiddle with knob until the LED indicator is at its peak – then try again.

The program should now load properly due to the playback head being perfectly aligned for the particular software you are loading. THE GAMES MACHINE tried out this machine in the office (and are still doing so) and it appears to work very well. All our Commodore 64 tape games have loaded to date. For more information, contact **Load-It, *35 Stretton Road, Solihull, Birmingham, W Midlands B90 2RX.***



Cut down on failed loads with the new Load-It datacorder



Manage data files on your wrist – the Seiko RC4000 wrist computer

WATCH THIS SPACE

SEIKO have launched a personal data system (The RC4000) cunningly disguised as a watch!

Information can be input into this wrist terminal either manually or via a computer and saved for future use. The Seiko RC4000 is compatible with most IBM PC clones, Apple series 11, BBC-B, Spectrum and Commodore 64/128 computers, and you can receive or transmit information between watch and computer. Up to 2K of data may be stored in the watch split into five files (12 if using a computer) taking the form of notes, price lists, phone numbers, train times and so on. This may be called up on the LCD screen which scrolls information in the form of 24-character pages, with the watch holding up to 80 pages.

Alarms for up to one year ahead can be set to remind the wearer of forthcoming events such as birthdays or anniversaries. Three versions are available, gold-coloured, metal case (£59.95), black chrome case (£49.95) and a pocket version with a black leather case (£59.95).

And in case we forgot to mention the fact, the RC4000 also tells the time!



BLAST ALONG A EUROMAX

EUROMAX, those joystick giants with a branch in Bridlington, have recently produced the Micro-Handler.

Compatible with all Atari computers and Commodore 64/128, this box of tricks includes a microswitch stick, two integrated paddles, adjustable auto-fire, large robust metal casing, rubber suction feet and an extra long connecting cable.

We tried the Micro-Handler with Mirrorsoft's *Mean Streak* on the Commodore 64 and Konami's *Nemesis II* on the MSX2: The stable metal casing with its suction feet helps frantic antics no end, but the fire buttons are stodgy. The auto-fire proves useful, however the paddle facility may be a little outdated for modern software. But it is well suited shoot-'em-up games as it sits very solidly on the desk through wave after wave of attacking aliens. The Micro-Handler retails for £24.95 and is available through THE GAMES MACHINE mail order facility.

Well suited to shoot-'em-ups: the new Euromax Micro-Handler

ADVENTUROUS AWARD

***The Guild Of Thieves* received the award for GAME OF THE YEAR at the British Micro Computing Awards 1987, held during the PCW Show.**

MAGNETIC SCROLLS managing director Anita Sinclair stated that she was pleased that *Guild* got the award rather than their first game *The Pawn*. She believes it won the award on its quality and depth of gameplay rather than for the technical achievement of its complex parser and impressive graphics.

We realise this may hardly be news by the time you read it but THE GAMES MACHINE will grab any excuse to print a picture of Anita. Oh and look out for Magnetic Scrolls's third adventure, *Jinxter*, which should be available before Christmas.



Anita Sinclair – pleased that Guild got the award

CHEAP THRILLS

Micronet has recently signed up leading budget software houses CODE MASTERS and FIREBIRD to sell their products through the on-line computing service run by TELEMAP.

Both firms will be making their entire range of titles available for telesoftware as and when they are released, prices could be reduced by as much as 25% below the normal recommended retail price of £1.99. Code Masters managing director David Darling said: 'As the best selling software house in Britain we're always striving to look after our customers. Micronet enables us to reach many of those customers in a more effective manner.'

Publisher of Firebird Silver products, Chris Smith, added: 'Budget software is an impulse buy, and telesoftware is the ideal environment for it.'.

Meanwhile, Code Masters and the Darlings have come in for some trade press stick from Headlines PR managing director Simon Harvey for their recent spate of 'corporate PR' which has tended to attack Mastertronic. In *Computer Trade Weekly* (2 November) Harvey stated that the attack had made Code Masters 'look completely stupid', and that reasonable people should not behave this way.

ROBTEK RELEASES

Robtek Ltd seem to be in for a busy time before Christmas with all their promised new releases hitting the shelves (including *Diablo* for the Amiga, reviewed in this issue).

The *Di Buddy* (Amiga £49.95) graphic utility set allows you to create, obtain, manipulate, organise, display and print out images. *Di Buddy* also includes a touch-up facility, freeze frame, poster maker, slide show and scissors. *Monitor Master* (Atari ST £49.95) allows the user to change monitors at the press of a button. Its function will be lost on most owners, but for those lucky enough to have a colour RGB *and* a monochrome monitor, *Monitor Master* makes it possible to switch between them without any cable fiddling – a must for decreasing wear and tear.

Laser-Set (PC £149.95) is claimed to be a professional desk top publishing package providing for typesetting that can be used for books, manuals, brochures, newsletters and many other products. Working with most existing word processors,it supports virtually all laser printers on the market at present. *Laser-Set* features automatic kerning, true justification and hyphenation, working in picas and points. THE GAMES MACHINE will be covering it in future DTP articles.

Another PC package is *Artpak* (£99.95), a presentation graphics program that provides new ways to present ideas and designs, especially enlivening various kinds of charts, which may be drawn, painted or constructed, all with animation and background music.

STILL INVOLVED IN 16 BIT.

DARRYL STILL has resigned from his job as production Manager with Audiogenic Software to help set up and run a new exclusively 16-bit software house.

The company, called GODAX SOFTWARE, is a subsidiary of Godax Developments which itself has recently become part of the growing Maynard International Ltd empire. MIL, who own various enterprises including Top Ten Software, is run by Martin Maynard, the man who formed Audiogenic in its original form late in the Seventies.

Still, who was originally with Incentive Software before spending two years with Audiogenic, said of the new venture: 'I hope to establish a reputation for a premium 16-bit label with high quality, original software for the ST and Amiga with possibly a provision for the Archimedes.' But he foresees that it will probably be the New Year before Godax Software makes an impact on the market.

DEVIL YOU SAY

Modem specialist DATAPHONE LTD has recently launched a new low-cost model called the Demon 2.

Its features include full computer control, auto-dial from the keyboard or directory and an auto-answer facility. Demon 2 will handle 1200/75 and 300/300 baud rates as well as 1200/1200 half duplex for bulk uploading. The modem can be used with any computer having a suitable interface and software, and is provided with a 25 pin D-socket for connection to an RS232/423 port. Demon 2 will retail for less than £80, and more information may be obtained from **Dataphone Ltd, *22 Alfric Square, Woodston, Peterborough, PE2 0JP.***

ATARI SHORTFALL

At a time when Atari has announced second quarter profits of more than $13 million, they have also disclosed that there will be a substantial global shortfall of STs this year, perhaps as many as 200,000 units.

The official line from the States is that Atari had underestimated demand, especially from the UK and German markets, and although they have increased their production capacity they have not been able to respond in time to meet the surge in demand. This is bad news for Atari UK, where a £1 million TV advertising campaign has already begun, aimed at increasing Atari's share of the popular home computer market during the Christmas period.

To add to the problems of Atari's national sales manager Paul Welch, are grumblings from distributors that the company only allows retailers seven days to return faulty stock, and with the time taken in distribution, unloading and checking, most cannot return computers that are 'dead on arrival'. Atari may now consider raising the return period to 30 days, which is what Commodore offers.

RAINBIRD GETS ZARCH

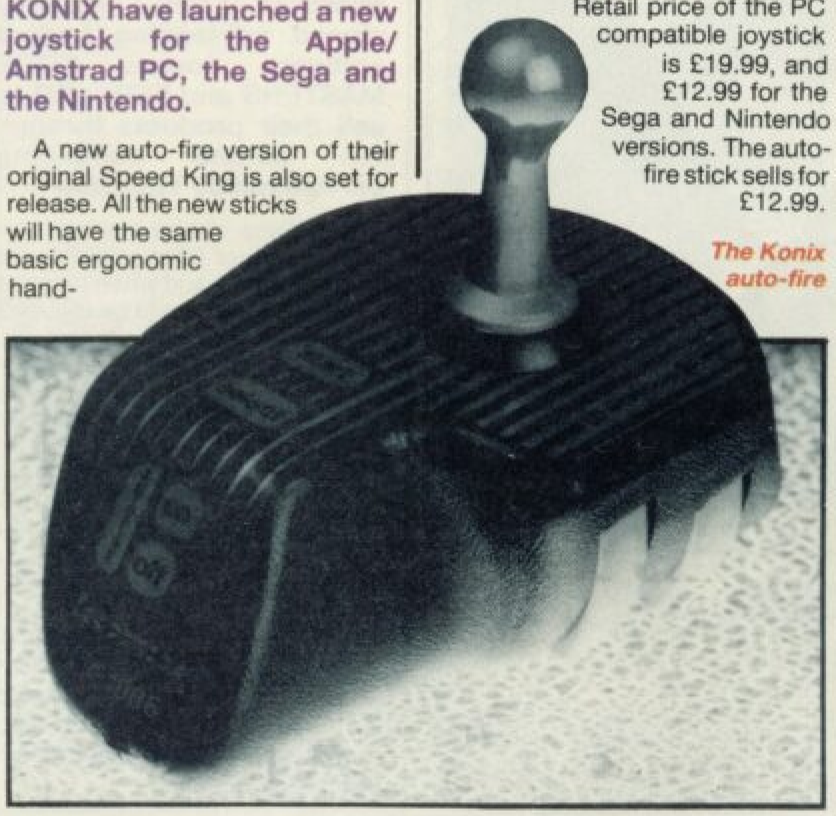
In our *Zarch* review (this issue) we state that Superior Software have no immediate plans for conversion of the first ever Acorn Archimedes game to other machines. Now last minute news reaches THE GAMES MACHINE which changes the picture.

RAINBIRD, a part of Telecomsoft, has gained the rights to David Braben's shoot-'em-up, and work has already begun on Amiga and Atari ST versions which should appear in the New Year. The move is not exactly a surprise: Braben's connection with Telecomsoft started when he co-wrote *Elite* for the BBC which was later sold to Telecomsoft for Spectrum, Amstrad and Commodore conversion, and released through Firebird.

OH JOY, A NEW STICK

KONIX have launched a new joystick for the Apple/ Amstrad PC, the Sega and the Nintendo.

A new auto-fire version of their original Speed King is also set for release. All the new sticks will have the same basic ergonomic hand-held design which resulted in the original Speed King's popularity. Retail price of the PC compatible joystick is £19.99, and £12.99 for the Sega and Nintendo versions. The auto-fire stick sells for £12.99.



The Konix auto-fire

ATARI SHOW

Last year the first ever Atari Christmas show packed nearly 10,000 visitors into London' Horticultural Hall.

This year the show returns, bigger and better, at the Novotel, Hammersmith from 20 to 22 November. Atari UK will be present with all its latest machines and systems, as well as a team of experts to give advice.

VIRGIN BUY INTO MASTERTRONIC

After several months of circulating rumours that budget software giants Mastertronic might go public comes surprise news that Virgin Vision Ltd has taken a 45% interest in Mastertronic Group Ltd.

The buy in will be managed through Virgin Publishing Ltd. To date Virgin Games has not been strongly represented in the 8-bit budget sector (other than through the *Now Games* compilations). Virgin publishing manager Nick Alexander said: 'This is a very exciting and substantial move for us. We have been looking for a budget market for some time and have been very impressed with Mastertronic's performance.'

The Virgin group is in an ideal position to capitalise on its varied market areas to develop a growing interest in cross-technology media including CD ROM and Interactive Video Disc. Put simply, they will be looking to publish product where books, music, film and games software all combine into one super home entertainment package. The merging of interests with Mastertronic places Virgin strongly in the mainstream of games production to further this development

SING A LONG A MAX VOLUME

Launched in July, VOICEOVER, a new sound system accessory, has proved to be somewhat of a hit within the teenage pop music market.

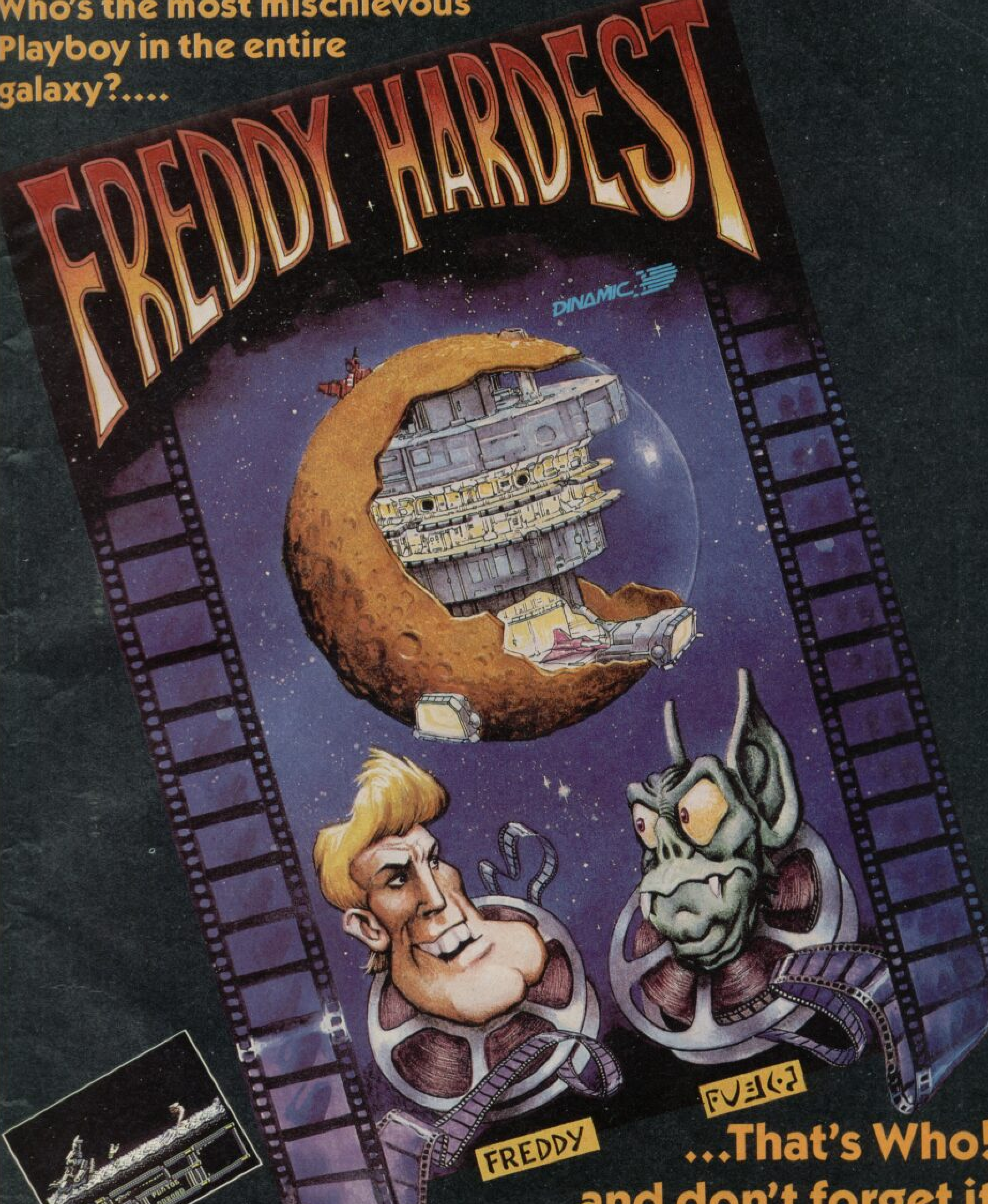
The new product may be plugged into a personal stereo, hi-fi or music centre and allows users to sing along with the tape playing while their voice is played back via headphones. Echo chamber simulation can be switched in to confuse the singer completely and two sets of 'phones may be used to allow friends to sing in harmony. Voiceover retails at £39.99 and comes in a package the size of a dual tape cassette box. Hopefully by next issue we will have one of these bop machines to review in depth, stay tuned.



WAR APOLOGY

Last issue, within the pages of our War Without Tears feature, we printed the price of the XSL PHASER COMMAND light gun as being £25. It is in fact £49. We apologise for any inconvenience or confusion caused and promise not to do it again unless we absolutely can't help it.

Who's the most mischievous Playboy in the entire galaxy?....



...That's Who!, and don't forget it!

You may not believe it but he's a super-sharp counter espionage agent with a big appetite for entertainment and there's nothing he enjoys more than a full blown bruise-up! Now trouble is heading his way as you help Freddy recover, after yet another crash-landing, to steal a space-craft to freedom. Take on man-eating ants, reptiles, robots, mutants and genetic throw-backs with Dinamic's latest wonderman – Freddy Hardest.

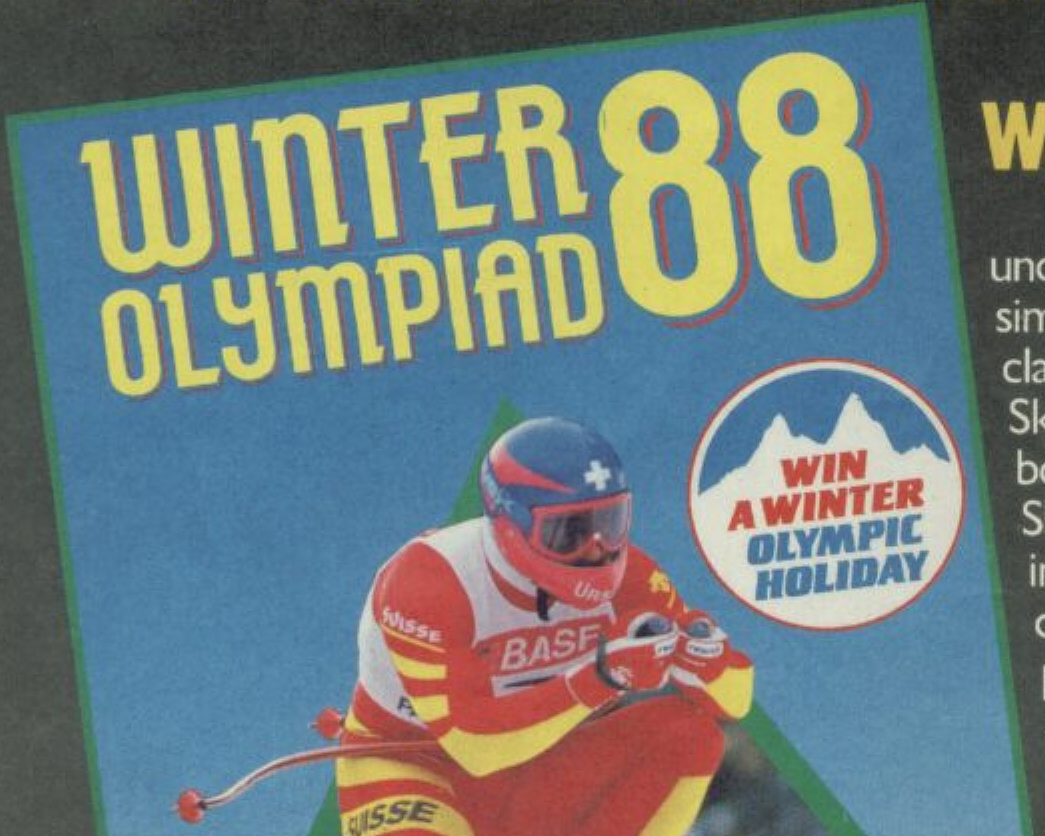
SPECTRUM £7.95 COMMODORE £8.95 AMSTRAD £8.95 MSX £8.95

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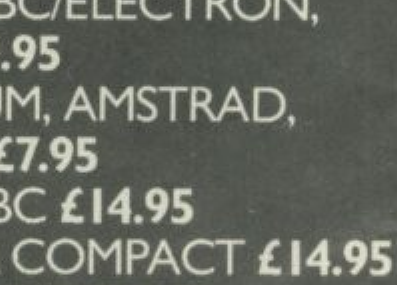
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- DISK - BBC **£14.95**
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- ATARI 8 BIT **£14.95**
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READERPAGE

Welcome to THE GAMES MACHINE's first readers' letters page. May I say 'thank you' to the hundreds of people who wrote in; because of the tight page allocation I could only fit in a handful. THE GAMES MACHINE, like other Newsfield magazines, will be devoting more space to readers' opinions as from the next issue – the first monthly one. Write to:

READERPAGE, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.*

THE EDITOR

ATARI MISINFORMATION

Dear Games Machine
Congratulations on producing a well balanced computer entertainment magazine. I am seriously considering replacing *Computer & Video Games* with your publication because of your more mature (on the whole!) attitude. I particularly liked the articles by Mel Croucher. I'd wondered what had happened to the former Automata boss – a definite plus for your magazine.

The reviews of films using computers as a theme was knowledgeable and fascinating – it jogged my memory of films I'd seen and completely forgotten about. A couple of points though – HAL in *2001*: I was under the impression the letter transposition was completely intentional, and *Tron* was not 'unsatisfying', it was brilliant!

Simon Goodwin was misinformed (The Duel – Atari v Commodore, Issue One) if he thought *Space War* was invented by Nolan Bushnell and the key to Atari's meteoric rise – *Pong* was the game he created and was the first true arcade machine. Also: Jack Tramiel resigned from Commodore; you stated that when Atari were creating their O/S, GEM was bought from IBM – but GEM had been developed by Digital Research and the deal was done with them, IBM have never owned GEM at any time; and Intel is not owned by IBM as stated in your explanation of 16-bit technology – IBM may use their chips but Intel is totally independent of them. If not, do you think they would let clones use the same chips?

Paul Hanson (Atari ST owner), Hampstead, London

Simon has been rather busy leading up to Christmas, but no doubt soon enough he will respond to your points! We think Mel is a plus point too, in fact 'plus' is one of his favourite words, especially when it comes to adding up the monthly writing bill . . . !

JUST RIGHT

Dear Games Machine,
I bought THE GAMES MACHINE after seeing it advertised in ZZAP! 64 (which I have bought since Issue One) and decided to write in and tell you how much I enjoyed it!

It's just right for the 'older' game player (well I am 18) with loads of features as well as the reviews which make it brilliant value. I think it will probably be in competition with *C&VG* which I have stopped buying because it's so childish.

I have just one gripe about the first issue and that's the Light Games feature; I thought it out of place – too childish. But apart from that the mag is great!

By the way I recently saw *Commodore User* saying that Gazza Penn has joined their reviewing team, this can't be true, can it?

Kevin Mannison, St Helens, Merseyside

We've had some compliments from people rather older than yourself about the Light Games feature, Kevin, so it just goes to show – one man's child is another man's poison. Yes, I'm afraid to say that Gary Penn, after years of running it down, has indeed joined* Commodore User*'s reviewing team. We'll say no more, huh?

OFFENDING MEL CROUCHER

Dear Games Machine
I am very impressed. Presentation and content are both top-notch and it makes lively and interesting reading, just like Newsfield's other mags. The reviews are excellent, but you could make the review boxes a little more detailed. And I didn't see any adventures in the first issue. Give them a review section of their own. In CRASH there has been controversy over including video reviews and arcade machines but surely they wouldn't be wrong in TGM. Why not make it a regular feature?

I particularly enjoyed the *Knightmare* and 'future' articles, but Mel Croucher's 'sexism in software' left me feeling a bit offended. Of course I object to the adverts he's talking about, but I resent being portrayed as a sex-crazy, girl-chasing idiot. Boys have minds of their own. To be quite honest, most of my friends and I don't give a damn if there's a semi-naked woman on an advert or not. If we are talking about computers, it's about high-score tables, cheat modes and THE GAME. If I took an advert like *Athena* around the boys in my class, I'd get them smirking but I doubt very much if they would buy the game purely because of the bra.

The trouble with Mel Croucher is that he sees everything 'original' to be entertainment. He advocates that realistic concepts must be encouraged. Personally, I play computer games to escape from the reality of exams and school. God help us if the only games we have are similar to *Deus Ex Machina* and *ID*.

As well as this, he went on for ages about the Freudian views of the adverts. I don't think downmarket software companies expect 13-year-olds to understand this attitude. Most boys in my class think Freud is a kind of deodorant. I'm surprised he didn't mention the millions of computer owners wiggling their phallus joysticks! However, it's good to see some humour in the magazine, especially question 14 in the trivia quiz. Ha, ha, Mel, Hilariously funny.

Anyway, I very much enjoyed the first issue. Keep up the good work!

David Lawson (Spectrum owner), Hamilton, Lanarks

I hope you find the review boxes a bit more detailed in this second issue – it takes a bit of time to settle into the best way of presenting information, especially where it relates to several machine formats – and of course we'll be having a regular adventure column. In the last issue, one was prepared but cut out at the last moment. I really don't have to defend Mel's views, he's quite capable of doing that for himself; and when we go monthly with Issue Three, I hope he will be able to do so more readily. But if he provokes open discussions between readers, then he's probably doing a good job!

NO MORONS HERE

Dear Games Machine
I bought TGM to see if the good points of CRASH could be carried forward to a magazine covering more than one aspect of computing. Congratulations!, you have not only succeeded, but you have surpassed CRASH in many ways. You have put your main competitor, *C&VG* totally to shame. The two magazines cover much of the same ground, but your style is very much better, not treating your readers as morons, whilst not being too high-brow.

I especially like the comparison between different versions of a game, which show that some games may work better on some computers than others – the Spectrum version of *Nemesis* springs to mind! The coverage of games consoles was well done, as was the Fighting Fantasy feature. It's also nice to see Mel Croucher writing for a magazine, I hope he is going to be a regular, as some of his stuff can be hilarious.

The only missing item is a section on coin-ops, but I am sure that you will include this once the mag has 'found its feet'.

Good luck for the future,

Jon Rose, (Editor of *Enigma* – Tapezine of the National Spectrum 128 User's Group). Bognor Regis, W Sussex

Thank you for your kind compliments Jon; but I wouldn't underestimate CRASH's ability to give THE GAMES MACHINE a fight! Clearly a machine-specific magazine can do far more justice to the needs of a user group in coverage. The object of THE GAMES MACHINE isn't to put either CRASH or ZZAP! out to graze, but to provide a real additional magazine that looks more at the game first, then its implementation on various machines. Thus we look to put things more in context for all user groups. That and hopefully giving you a good read (including coin-ops in future issues)!

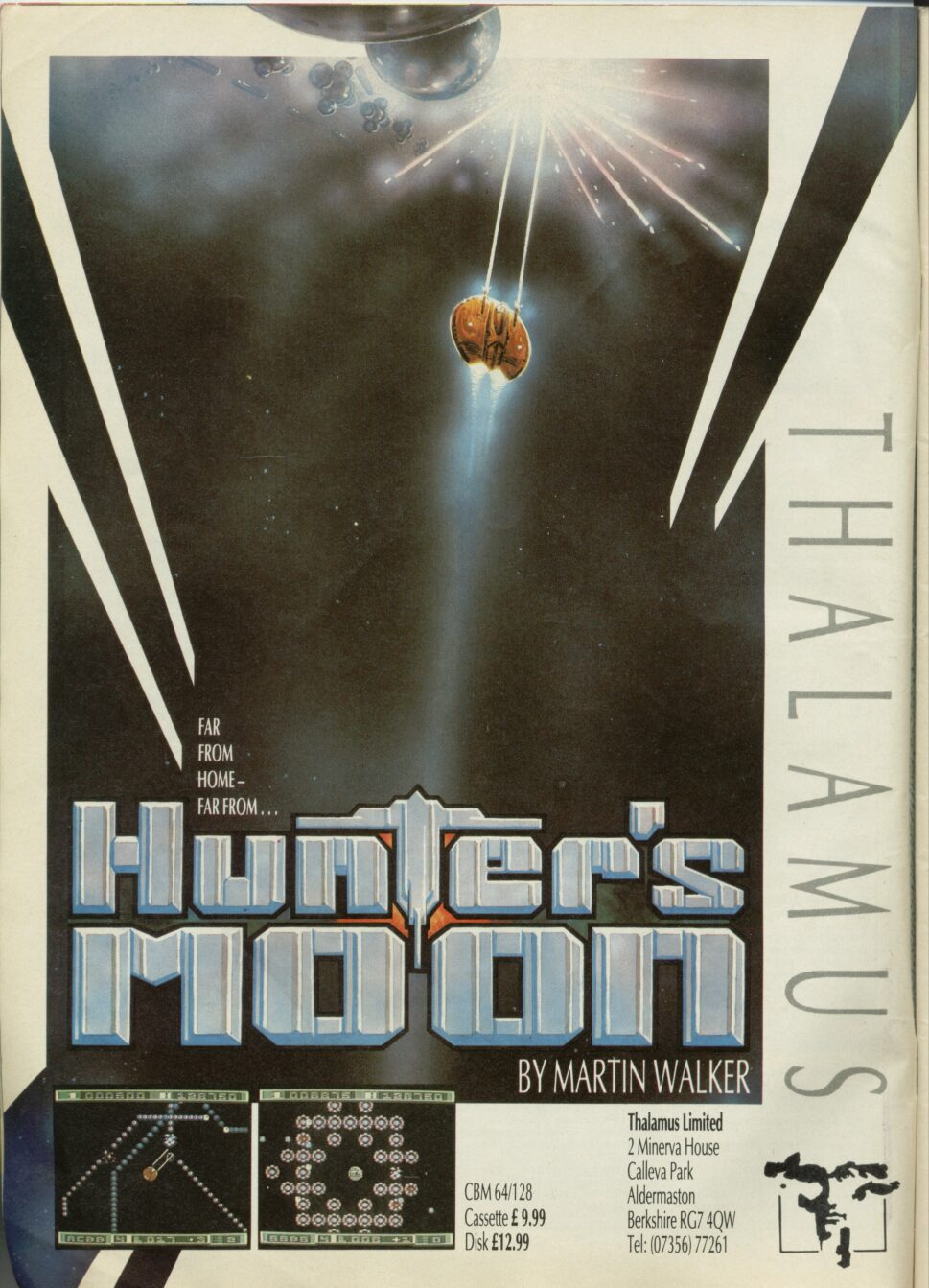
MORE 16-BIT

Dear Games Machine
In your first issue there was too much on Spectrum, Amstrad and C64 and too little about Amiga and Atari ST. I have an Amiga myself and I would like to read more about it than one review (now, don't say that it was the only game that came to your offices, a lot of Amiga games are released every month). Also, all the 8-bits have their own magazines.

I admit the multi-format reviews are a good idea, but it is very seldom you will get a chance to review a game on both 8- and 16-bit machines. You were lucky with *Chessmaster* and *Tai-Pan* but in most cases the 16-bit versions are either way before or after the 8-bit. (*Defender Of The Crown, Wizball*).

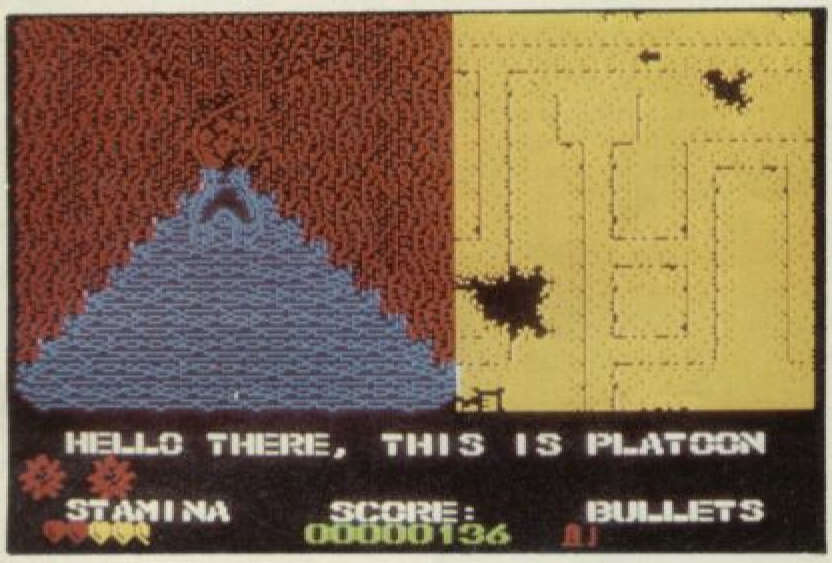
Nathan Brazil, Denmark

You are quite right Nathan; we were told by the Launch Issue editors that no up to date 16-bit games were available for review – a little mysterious in the circumstance. I think you will find this issue redresses the balance to quite a degree. Thank you for your interesting dissertation on piracy and cracking in Denmark. Sadly, through tight space, I had to leave it out, but we may be looking at the subject on an international basis soon, and a more detailed view from you would be most welcome.


FAR
FROM
HOME –
FAR FROM . . .
Hunter's Moon
BY MARTIN WALKER
CBM 64/128
Cassette £ 9.99
Disk £12.99
Thalamus Limited
2 Minerva House
Calleva Park
Aldermaston
Berkshire RG7 4QW
Tel: (07356) 77261
THALAMUS

SEVERAL DROPS OF IMAGINATION IN THE OCEAN

This time last year there were doubts over Ocean's credibility as a quality software house. This Christmas, after a year of successes, the situation is totally reversed. They have some major licences lined up, and with a heavy helping of original concepts everything looks hunky dory. What are they? Well . . .



PLATOON

Commodore 64/128, Spectrum 48/128
Amstrad CPC, Atari ST

AFTER many months of design and development, *Platoon*, Ocean's only Christmas film licence, looks set to be ready for the 8-bits in January and later in the spring on the Atari ST.

Based upon the critically praised Orion film released earlier this year, Ocean were originally stumped at turning a manic shoot-'em-up movie into a fully fledged computer hit. But now, a few weeks before completion, *Platoon* looks like being one of the best games Ocean have ever devised.

Set in Vietnam, *Platoon* takes the player through six scenarios each with great variety of gameplay.

Starting deep in the jungle with a platoon of five men, you have to negotiate a tangled maze and down into a series of waterlogged tunnels full of enemies who spring from the dark waters and attack. Escape, if you can, and you arrive back in the jungle at night – straight into the jaws of an ambush. Sending up flares provides some light for a limited time so you can spot the enemy. Finally, make your way through dark passages in rough terrain searching for Sergeant Barnes before the napalm strikes.

Platoon comes in a large box packaged with the film's main theme tune on an audio cassette.



COMBAT SCHOOL

Commodore 64/128, Spectrum 48/128
Amstrad CPC

LICENSED from the Konami coin-op, it has taken a team of ten programmers three months to convert, but the effort and man-power put into this looks like it is going to pay off – but see for yourself when *Combat School* is released this month.

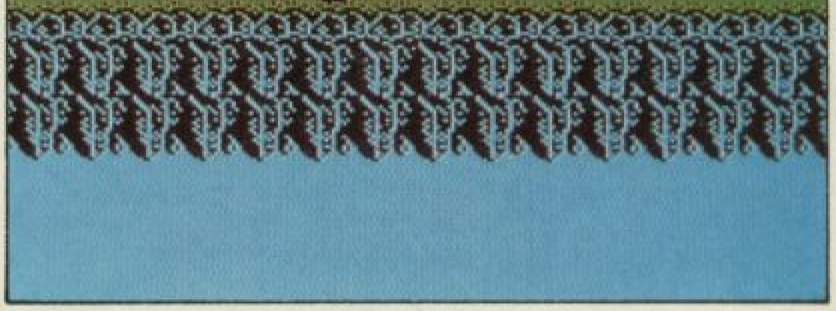
Like the arcade original, *Combat School* takes the player through seven tests of stamina and strength with a deadly mission at the end of the training events. And they comprise an assault course, three shooting ranges, iron man race, arm wrestling and a fight against the instructor, all relying on joystick waggling power and speed – like *Daley Thompson's Decathalon* before it, *Combat School* is sure to be the cause of many broken joysticks through the Christmas holidays and a great comfort to joystick manufacturers.

GRYZOR

Commodore 64/128, Spectrum 48/128
Amstrad CPC



ANOTHER Konami conversion set for November is the out-and-out shoot-'em-up *Gryzor* – and a difficult one too, because of the original's amazing graphics. Infiltrate the Alien Rebels' HQ, blasting your way through level after level of death and



destruction. It starts in an alien forest from which you make your way to the stronghold. There you negotiate corridors full of electric forcefields to destroy the alien heart.

How has it fared? Graphically *Gryzor* is superb on the Amstrad CPC and there's no reason why the Commodore should be any different. The Spectrum version is obviously less colourful but plays just as well as the original.

PRESS ANY KEY

RASTAN SAGA

Commodore 64/128, Spectrum 48/128
Amstrad CPC

BARBARIANS seem generally popular in the arcade stakes this year, so welcome please, if you will, another graphical masterpiece making his first 8-bit debut, Hunk Of The Month – Rastan the Barbarian.

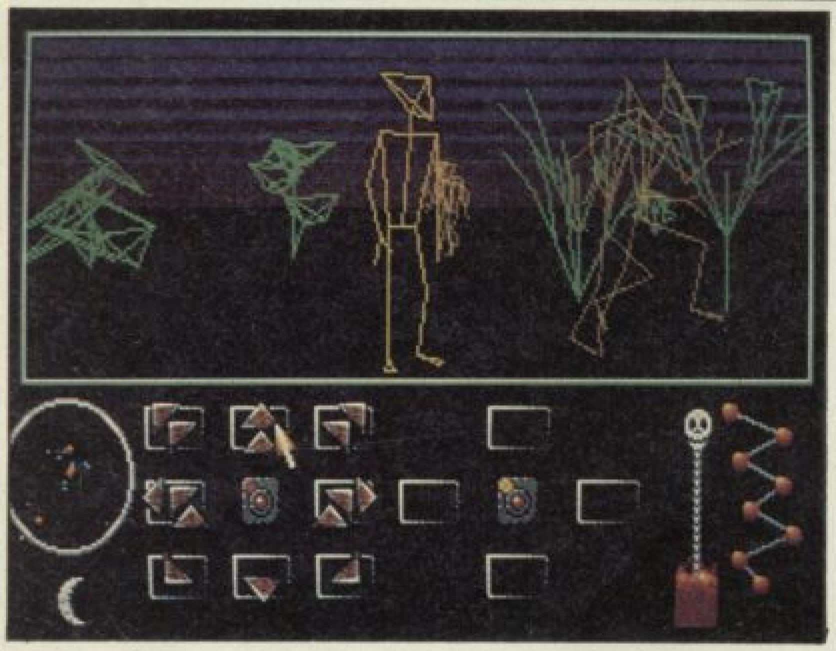
In an attempt to conqueror the evil wizards, (you know the ones) Rastan crosses six lands, at the end of each lives a wizard (evil of course).

But before reaching a wizard Rastan has to deal with a series of mythological beasts, all displayed in graphical detail. Rastan would make the Master Butcher of those telly ads look generally tame, since his method of 'dealing' with them usually entails slicing their monstrous bodies to pieces in a resounding slash of gore. And as if that was not sufficient, the terrain he battles across is littered with



hazards such as lava pits and crevasses (which can be crossed by swinging on vines, however). Like *Gryzor*, *Rastan Saga* is unlikely to merit the Mel Croucher Computer Game Peace Award, but at least we're dealing here with the land of myth and not that of the Nine O'Clock News.

Rastan's monumental saga commences with the game's release in December. Sadly, no news of any 16-bit plans at the moment.



ECO

Atari ST, Amiga

HAVE you have ever fancied playing God? Frankenstein did, and look where it got him. But **Denton Design**'s newest invention, *Eco*, provides you with the chance to do so with slightly less dramatic effect. Creature creation is the name of the game: you start out as an insect on a strange planet, which is displayed in perspective with excellent wireframe graphics, striving to survive and learning to reproduce. Mating allows you to alter genes, creating a new offspring which is then under your control. The ultimate aim is to become a humanoid – but what if you change the genes after that? Find out when it is released in December.

WHERE TIME STOOD STILL

Spectrum 128 only
Commodore 64/128
Amstrad CPC, PC, Atari ST
Amiga

WRITTEN by **Denton Designs**, *Where Time Stood Still* is in the same atmospheric and graphical vein as their previous offering *The Great Escape* – the PC version of which is reviewed this issue – only the scrolling (in four diagonal directions) is faster. Incidentally, CRASH magazine readers will have already heard about this game – it had a working title of



Tibet, and if you're wondering why, read on . . .

After a plane crash you are happy to discover that you and your team of explorers have survived. But where are you? Well, THE GAMES MACHINE will let you into a secret – you're in Tibet (which is okay, if a bit chilly), but the real problem lies in the when? – it is, you discover, several million years BC when dinosaurs roamed the range, and the sky was not cloudy all day. Pitted against cannibals, vicious pygmies, dinosaurs and the very elements themselves, can you battle to stay alive in a game with a map 50 times bigger than *The Great Escape*?

Of all versions in preparation, the ST graphics sound most promising. The 8-bit versions (like the Spectrum shot seen here) will all be largely monochrome, and so will those on the Atari, designed by Steve Cain, but he is using many shades of grey to make it incredibly atmospheric.

Where Time Stood Still should be out early in 1988. 48K Spectrum owners may have to wait some time, but Ocean are looking into ways of fitting the game into the available memory . . . if they can.



MATCH DAY II

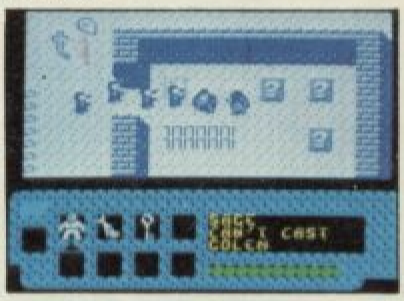
Spectrum 48/128, Amstrad CPC
Commodore 64, Amstrad PCW

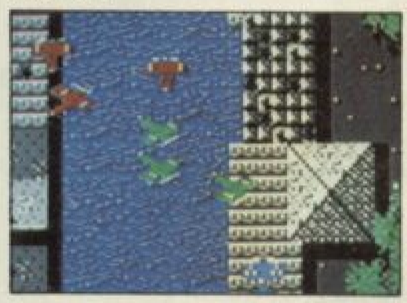
MATCH DAY when originally released in mid-1985 was the most exciting soccer simulation/ game devised for a home micro. Now, it is action-replaying on our screens with advanced game play, more moves, more animation and generally a whole lot better thanks to the inimitable **Jon Ritman** and **Bernie Drummond**, creators of the original, who say they are 'head over heels' with the result. *Match Day II* should, and that's a very indefinite 'should', should be on the shelves by the time you read this. Quite a novelty for the Amstrad PCW (Joyce), as it is the first sports simulation for it.

FIREBIRD

JUST about finished is *Druid II* for the Spectrum, and it looks like being as slick as the Commodore version reviewed last issue. It's along the similar lines to the original seen last Christmas but with the addition of 32 spells, 15 different levels and a host of new features.

Firebird's second Taito coin-op conversion is *Flying Shark*, a fast and furious vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up with you battling against enemy forces in your plane. Armed with an endless supply of bullets and a few smart bombs, *Flying Shark* is soon to be available for the Commodore 64/ 128, Spectrum, Amstrad CPC and Atari ST.



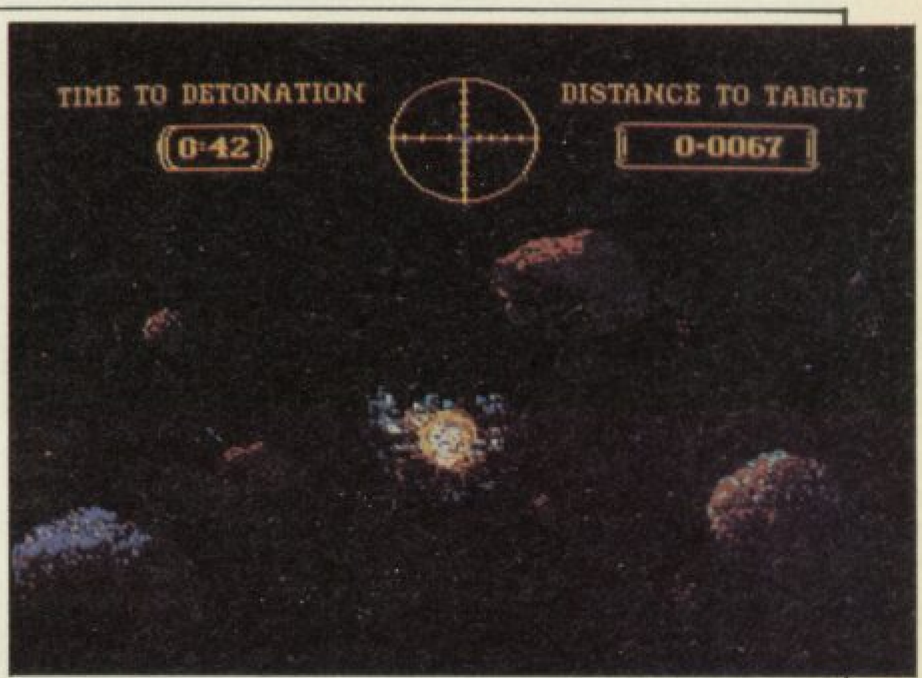


TYNESOFT

IT IS called placing your bets on all runner. What is? *Winter Olympiad 88*, that's what. The line-up includes Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, C16/plus 4, Commodore 64/128, Atari XE, BBC, Electron, Master, ST and Amiga. Phew! With six events – slalom, downhill racing, bob sled, biathlon and speed skating, *Winter Olympiad* should be reaching the shops in festive spirit by mid-November.







ARCANA

YOU may remember they brought you the 8-bit monster trivia quiz *Power Play* last year and now it's nearly ready for the ST and Amiga – as well as a new title called *Mars Cops*.

Power Play involves four teams of lowly mythological beasts trying desperately to become high and mighty by answering trivia questions and moving across a board killing each other. Arcana say there are some additional sections being included although we have no details on those yet.

From the pursuit of the trivial to that of criminals: *Mars Cops* is split into three phases; UFOs are invading the solar system and they have reached outpost Mars. As a copper on the beat, yours is the task of chasing and destroying them. Starting in a Martian canal, you must guide a space fighter through treacherous terrain in pursuit of a UFO, and with only one missile you have to make sure that the first hit is dead on as the standard lasers only stun.

A time limit is imposed for the first section, and when it runs out the UFO lifts off and flies into deep space. Once again you can chase it before returning to the surface in phase three to land and refuel – just in time to catch the next invading UFO.

Mars Cops, for both the ST and Amiga, should be finished by the time you read this.



CARRIER COMMAND
Rainbird

8-BIT owners can drool over the solid 3-D graphics of *Driller* this Christmas, but there is no need for 16-bit users to feel left out, thanks to Rainbird and their latest – the solid 3-D *Carrier Command*.

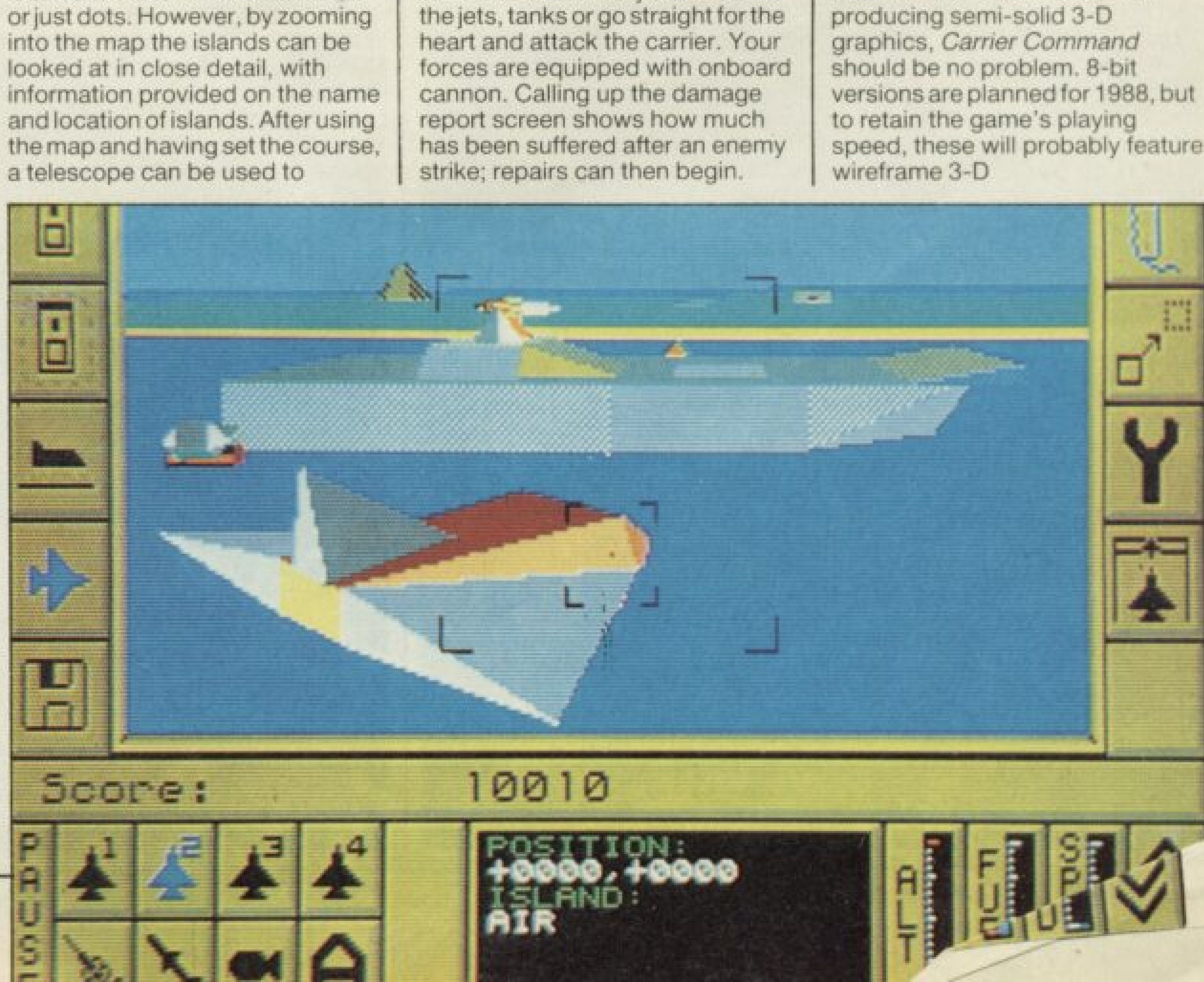
Set around an archipelago of 64 islands in the none too-distant future, you take control of a futuristic Weapons Carrier, similar to the aircraft carriers of today but with a complement of amphibious tanks as well as jets and missiles on board. The objective is to clear the islands of their defence systems, which are very similar to your own, and any invading force.

The carrier is equipped with four jets and four tanks all of which can be armed from the weapons store. From the take off point on the carrier the jets can fly around and explore the archipelago – all displayed in animated solid 3-D. If, however, you don't want to fly the jets it is possible to preset their flight paths and send them out unmanned. The same applies to the tanks.

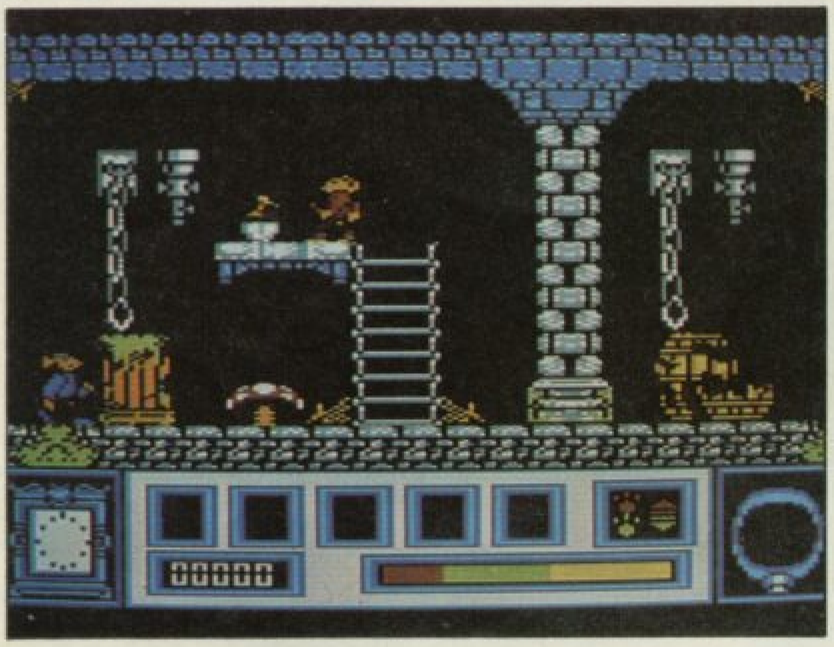
In a similar way the carrier can be navigated by preset coordinates while you embark upon a secondary mission in a jet or tank. To give an overall view of the achipelago a map is provided, and on standard display the islands are shown as small blobs or just dots. However, by zooming into the map the islands can be looked at in close detail, with information provided on the name and location of islands. After using the map and having set the course, a telescope can be used to magnify the view of the surrounding area by up to x8.

The island's defences will send out forces which may attack either the jets, tanks or go straight for the heart and attack the carrier. Your forces are equipped with onboard cannon. Calling up the damage report screen shows how much has been suffered after an enemy strike; repairs can then begin.

Carrier Command is currently being programmed by **Realtime Software** on the ST and Amiga, and with their track record for producing semi-solid 3-D graphics, *Carrier Command* should be no problem. 8-bit versions are planned for 1988, but to retain the game's playing speed, these will probably feature wireframe 3-D







GREMLIN GRAPHICS

CHRISTMAS stocking filler games have been a respectable idea since Gargoyle Games did so well with *Sweevo's World*. Now it's time for Gremlin graphics to go wacky for Christmas with their *Alternative World Games*, a bizarre collection of stupendously odd events.

Your host, a parrot, takes the players sack-racing in Naples, boot-throwing at the Colosseum, pole-climbing in Verona and running-up-walls in Venice. *Alternative World Games* is out now for the Commodore, but a bit later for Spectrum, Amstrad and Atari ST. But why 'World', when it all takes place in Italy?

The TV series *Masters Of The Universe* has now been made into a feature film (which is being very favourably reported and which will be released in December), to which Gremlin have bought the game rights. He-Man has been entrusted with the powers of Castle Grayskull to defend the universe against evil – and that means his arch enemy Skeletor. It's an arcade-adventure and is due around Christmas across Spectrum, Amstrad CPC and Commodore formats.

Finally, take an early peek at *Basil The Great Mouse Detective* on the Atari ST, licensed from the Walt Disney film of the same name. We'll have 8-bit reviews of *Basil* next issue.

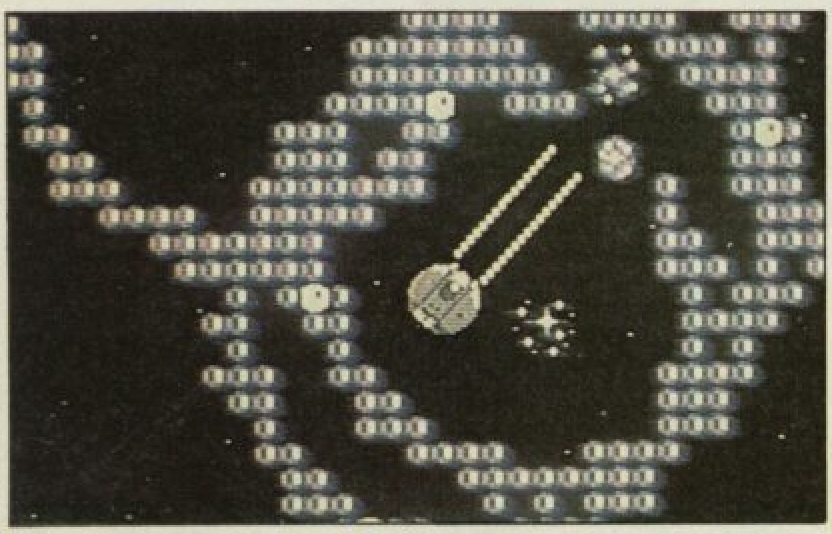


THALAMUS

AT LAST, a product which isn't written by Finnish **Stavros Fasoulas**. The next release is *Martin Walker's Hunter's Moon*, a weirdly effective shoot-'em-up for the Commodore 64/128 only.

Hunter's Moon is a place, rather like Brookside or Coronation Street, and it is there that the Hunter, a large space craft, is journeying. However, after straying too near a black hole, the Hunter gets warped to an unknown sector of the galaxy inhabited aliens who exist in hive-like constructions. 'Starcells' control the community of workers and soldiers, and it is their power that the Hunter must absorb by blasting through the structures the workers build up around them. When the power level is sufficient it takes you through loopspace.

Loopspace is a limbo region which allows the Hunter to warp to different parts of the galaxy, each inhabited by different Starcell colonies. Featuring full screen multi-directional scrolling, 128 levels across 1000 screens and a Loopspace trainer, *Hunter's Moon* should be ready some time in November at £9.99. Meanwhile, everyone wish Stavros a happy, and very white, Christmas on the borders where he's helping defend Finland against the Russians.



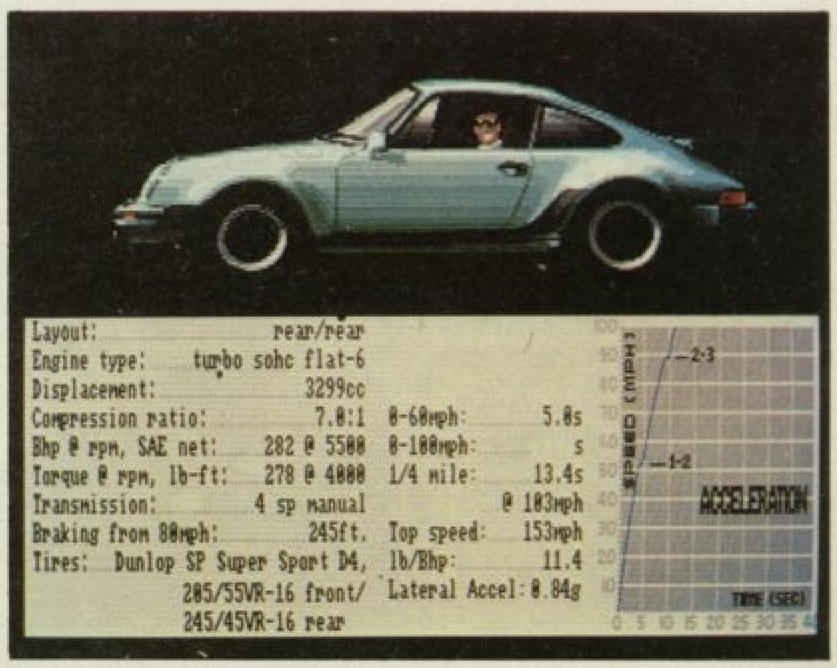
ELECTRONIC ARTS

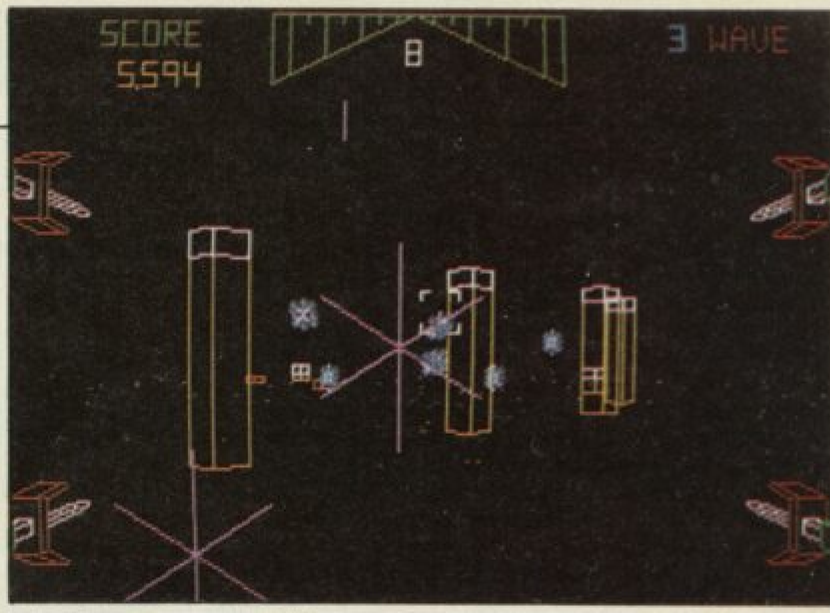
THREE forthcoming titles for Commodore 64/128 are *Demon Stalker*, *Test Drive* and *Skate Or Die*, the last two also appearing on the Amiga.

Demon Stalker is a *Gauntlet* variant with a menu-driven construction set included, offering 99 levels of mazes with Calvrak the Demon waiting on level 100.

On the Amiga first, and later the Commodore, *Test Drive* is a yuppie simulation which lets you fantasise that you are at the wheel of the world's top sports cars from a Ferrari to a Lamborghini. The object is to get from jet-setting A to *nouveau riche* B in a restricted time limit whilst avoiding other drivers and those two major road hazards, falling rocks and the police.

Skate Or Die is of a similar theme to *720°*. There are five different skateboarding competitions over three tracks – ramp freestyle, downhill race and ramp hill jump. Real fun for all the family, as they say, as up to eight players can partake at any one time.





DOMARK

AFTER being quite secretive about it when they secured the licence, Domark are ready to release their coin-op conversion of the Atari *Star Wars*, which originally stood proudly in the arcades of four years ago. We've been playing the almost complete Atari ST game, and it is a creditably accurate translation, right down to Luke and Obi Wan's digitised voices (or is that really Jeffrey Archer in there?).

In three stages, the venerable wireframe *Star Wars* takes you hurtling through space towards the Death Star madly pursued by – and madly pursuing – Empire fighters, across the surface of the Death Star, blasting turrets and laser emplacments, and finally plunging down into the equatorial trench towards the exhaust duct.

Star Wars is set for release at the end of November on Spectrum, Commodore, Amstrad, BBC and Atari ST at £9.99 on cassette, £12.95 for Commodore and BBC diskette and £14.95 for ST and Amstrad diskette.

ELITE

THE CLASSIC coin-op *Space Harrier*, minus hydraulic chair, comes to the Atari ST in November, nearly a year after its 8-bit release. Taking control of a Space Harrier – a hi-tech pilot of the future, equipped with a jet-pack and an ultra-gun – the objective is to rid a planet of invading fantasy aliens.

Split into 18 levels, the planet surface scrolls towards you at quite an alarming rate while the aliens fly at you at an even more alarming rate. To complete a level a dragon swoops in and twists around the screen; several shots are needed to dispense with the foul creature.

The almost complete ST *Space Harrier* we have seen gets closest to the arcade machine graphically, they are solid and equally as detailed and colourful. If the animation remains as fast as it is in the preview version, then ST *Space Harrier* looks set to be a 16-bit Christmas winner.





SOFT REFLECTIONS

MIRRORSOFT have four 16-bit titles coming out before Christmas.

Firstly there's *King Of Chicago* for the Amiga which, like *Defender Of The Crown* is a **Cinemaware** title. Originally published on the Apple Macintosh, it features some beautiful graphics as a background to your battle to become king of the gangsters in the American Twenties. Should be on the streets by now.

And there's a strange little number whose title sounds rather like they forgot a letter – *Oids*. The plot tells of a race of Bio-creates who, although very intelligent, are downright nasty, who insist on making their android slaves' lives a misery by pulling their arms and legs off as a practical joke. Being the kind, warmhearted sort of intergalactic stormtrooper that you are, you're determined to see this stopped by destroying the Bio-creates' factory in your V-Wing fighter craft.

So, what it really boils down to is a rather good shoot-'em-up featuring the revolutionary Nova-bombs, which make bigger booms than before. Out soon for the Atari ST.

CRL

AFTER Electronic Arts took over their distribution, CRL's products were slightly delayed, but here comes another another batch of healthy releases kicking off with the graphically impressive *Jet Boys*. They are on a suicide mission to a bizarre planet, battling with alien forces through a horizontally scrolling landscape. On each level there's a mammoth adversary with a distinct armoury to deal with. Playing solo, or as a suicide pact with a comrade, *Jet Boys* looks like a smart shoot-'em-up for November on the Commodore 64/128.



Also for the Commodore is *I, Alien* starring an alien who wouldn't hurt an intergalactic fly. Humans have arrived on his planet after a nuclear war, and want to take the alien back as a specimen to breed a new food source. Not wanting to be turned into Alien Hotpot, his only chance is to head through the maze of tunnels, find the escape pod, not forgetting to deactivate the time bomb before he leaves.

Other CBM64 titles include *Mandroid*, sequel to *Cyborg*, and *Life Force* which involves the destruction of an orbiting power station that has taken on a life of its own.

Finally, and perhaps most notoriously, there's the first British computer game to get an X-rating – *Jack The Ripper*, an adventure written by the ladies of **St Brides**. The graphics, as you can see from the screenshot, are pretty gruesome. How did the poor ladies cope? Find out on page 23 where Mel Croucher of the delicate sensibility chats with them.



QUICKSILVA

PAC'S BACK! shout the hoardings, computer nasties are out, no more barbarians slashing Page Three girls to bits with Black-and-Decker 7" circular rip-saws – no, it's back to roots with a new Pac Man game called *Pac Land* licensed from the Namco-Atari arcade machine.

Set on Pac's island home, the story revolves around the kindhearted orange segment's desire to help a lost fairy return to Fairyland. Constantly pursued by his erstwhile paranormal ghost opponents, Blinky, Pinky, Inky and Clyde, Pac's objective is to make his way through different landscapes, return the fairy and then potter back home to Mrs Pac.

The storyline is, of course, as sickeningly sweet as a fairyground candyfloss, but Quicksilva promise that the game is a tough nut to crack.

Pac Land on Commodore 64/128, Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, MSX, Atari ST and Amiga, should be out in time for Christmas.


KNIGHTMARE: OFFICIAL COMPUTER VERSION O
ITV's adventure game show
Knightmare
YOUR BEST EVER NIGHTMARE!!
Knightmare the computer game uniquely combines the best elements of traditional adventuring with some hot arcade action and provides puzzles and riddles of a varying nature not found before in computer games.
Mail Order: Activision (UK) Ltd, Units 3 & 4 Lloyds Close, Finedon Road Industrial Estate, Wellingborough, Northampton NN8 4SR. Tel: (0933) 76768
Commodore 64/128 Cassette (£9.99) and Disk (£12.99) ZX Spectrum 48k/128k/+ (£9.99) Amstrad CPC Cassette (£9.99) and Disk (£14.99) Atari ST (£14.99).
ACTIVISION
Copyright 1987 Anglia Television. Game copyright 1987

WHERE THERE'S YUK THERE'S BRASS

In the second of his industry analyses, Mel Croucher leaves the seamy side of software sex and gets to grips with computerised violence.

In the beginning was pingpong, which begat the shoot-'em-up, which begat the beat-'em-up, which begat the computer-nasty, and there was a wailing and a gnashing of teeth, and the multitude was sore afraid that profits were about to go right down the lavvy-pan. And verily, as I write this, the state of the best selling games software titles breaks down something like this:

SO-CALLED BUDGET TITLES

Competitive Sport Simulations	40%
Violent Conflict Simulations	28%
Games of Incidental Violence	20%
Certifiable 'Computer Nasties'	08%
Others	04%

SO-CALLED FULL-PRICE TITLES

Violent Conflict Simulations	42%
Competitive Sport Simulations	26%
Games of Incidental Violence	14%
Certifiable 'Computer Nasties'	14%
Others	04%

Like it or not, those of us who create, flog, or play computer games are participants in an industry based on the packaging and selling of products the overwhelming majority of which encourage young people to indulge in electronic acts of violence on little screens.

In putting together this collection of other people's opinions, I have tried hard to keep my own feelings off the page. Instead I have gathered the recorded voices of some of the most influential and respected people in British games software and thrown in the odd psychotherapist, very odd literary giant, and supremely odd mate of mine. The following transcriptions were all taken long after the Government, press, and sundry loudmouths made knee-jerk reactions to the Hungerford massacre. Everyone has had time to think long and hard about violence in computer games, and the purpose of this survey is to make THE GAMES MACHINE readers question their own attitudes in response to the very different talking heads that follow.

But first a message from a few guys who couldn't quite make the interviews:

'HE WHO LIVES BY THE SWORD SHALL DIE BY THE SWORD' **(Jesus)**

'C'MON PUNK, MAKE MY DAY' **(Dirty Harry)**

'THERE ARE TWO CERTAINTIES IN LIFE, SEX AND DEATH' **(Woody Allen)**

'NOTHING IS GOING TO MAKE THE LION LIE DOWN WITH THE LAMB: UNLESS THE LAMB IS INSIDE' **(D H Lawrence)**

SUSAN VAS DIAS . . .

. . . is Principal Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist at St Barts Hospital, London, in other words she's a shrink. So let her kick off the debate with her superior knowledge about what makes us kids tick. Take it away Susan:

'Aggression is innate in all human beings. All too often children are raised to feel that their angry, violent feelings are naughty and wrong. The use of fantasy to accept and master aggression is essential in human development. When (fantasy) characters are 'bonked', 'bombed' and 'smacked' but survive unharmed, children learn that their angry, violent wishes and feelings don't damage and are a normal part of themselves. Destructive events, such as cats killing birds and people killing fish to fantasies about violent human encounters, can be observed in all children's play.'

"The use of fantasy to accept and master aggression is essential in human development." SUSAN VAS DIAS

Personally, I think that's hogwash when applied to computer nasties, but I'm not going to include my opinions, am I? Except to say that the difference between cats and kids is something to do with the power of reason, speech and so-called civilisation. Ho hum. Who's next? Why, if it isn't the man who inspired me to start writing computer games all those years ago . . .

SIR CLIVE SINCLAIR

MEL - Talk to me about the best-selling computer games played on the computers you originally conceived.

CLIVE - I'm very sad to see the current crop of games that glorify violence, very sad. It's a very unwise development, it's alarming.

MEL - Look into your crystal ball.

CLIVE - Games are getting more realistic, and this trend will continue as new machines come out with more powerful graphics. The last thing computers should be used for is to emulate violence between human beings. Aliens, monsters, that's a joke, and can be seen as such, but I am sure that certain games are a corrupting influence. A Tragedy.

MEL - Those are very strong words, 'corrupting', 'tragedy'. Do you think your technology is abused?

CLIVE - It is a bad use of it, absolutely, yes. Let's not mince words – that means abuse.

MEL - Would you, no, could you try to stop youngsters from using your machines to play violent games?

CLIVE - I would try to dissuade them, yes. I want you to write that in your article.

MEL - But isn't the profit motive so strong that software houses will develop more and more violent games?

CLIVE - The day will come, and maybe not very far away, when the law steps in. It has in Germany already.

MEL - You mean their banning of *Barbarian*?

CLIVE - Yes indeed. And I think such things will be banned here before long. Sad, because I don't like censorship at all.

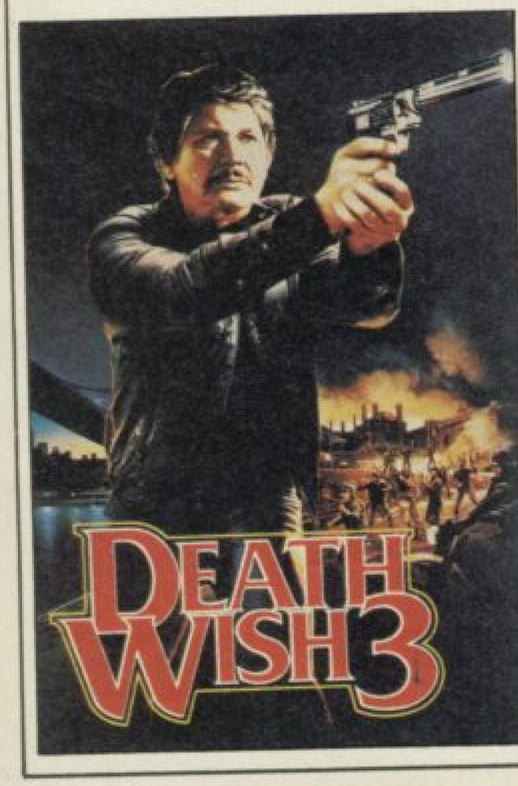
MEL - You'd like to see self-restraint as opposed to the law getting involved?

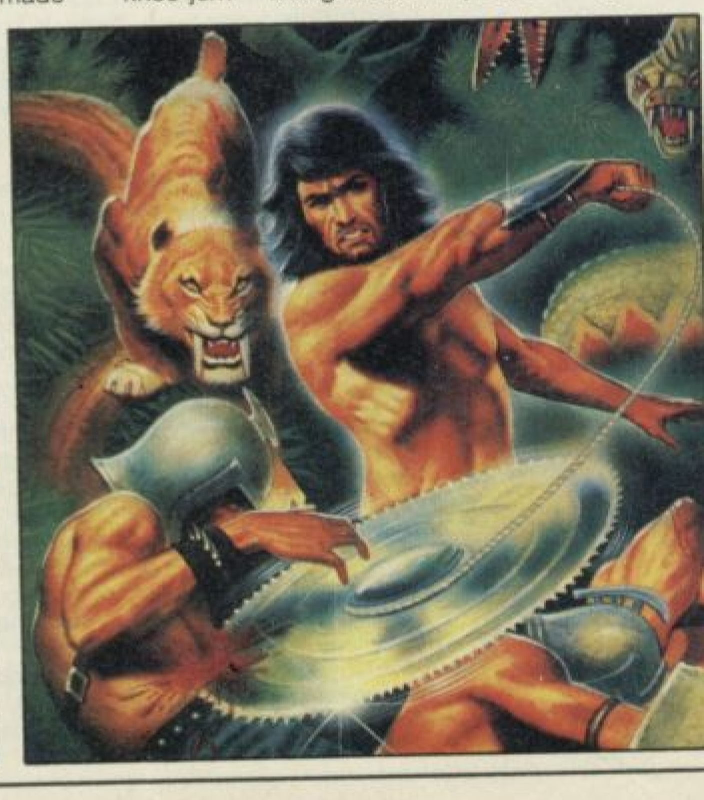
CLIVE - Manufacturers should respect their customers. Very soon, with developments in laser disks, things are going to get much more realistic, more gory.

MEL - But do you believe people won't be able to separate reality from imaginary experiences?

CLIVE - It is a worry. I don't honestly know. Yes, it's my fear!

Whether you agree with Sinclair or





PRESS ANY KEY

not, his picture of the next stage in computer simulations is very bleak, indeed, the sort of stuff that sf writers have been predicting for decades, where people lose themselves inside weird and often horrific fantasies. So what makes people like me continue to develop 'entertainments' with the potential to backfire like this? I want my work to be as 'realistic' a fantasy as possible, so do most others.

IAN STEWART . . .

. . . is the boss of the highly successful Gremlin Graphics outfit. I paid him a visit.

MEL - I've just won Second Prize in your Charles Bronson *Deathwish 3* lookalike compo. Do I really look like a killer?

IAN - Congratulations! You didn't win because you smiled, Bronson never smiles.

MEL - I'm not surprised, carrying all those firearms around with him, his back must be killing him. Anyway, thanks very much, what do I win?

IAN - One Philips CD midi-system will be arriving at your front door very soon, probably in bits.*

MEL - Bronson, *Deathwish 3*, Hungerford, sick.

IAN - Oh. I see. Sex is okay, but violence is out.

MEL - Sure, I believe that, that's fine with me. People can have a bonk after watching bonking films, but what about Bernard Getz who gunned down people in the subway after watching Bronson do it on screen, or Michael Ryan who dressed up as Rambo and killed 16 people at random?

IAN - *(long pause)* I had every opportunity to maximise the coverage I could have got from the Hungerford massacre. We didn't speak to anybody. Nobody at all. Not even you, Mel. And that's the way it stands at the moment.

MEL - Presumably you've been approached personally to comment.

IAN - It would have been ideal as a promotion, but there is no way I'm going to use or abuse anything as tragic as that.

MEL - Will you be withdrawing *Deathwish 3*?

IAN - It's still in the shops, and as with any software product, it really hasn't got that much of a long life.

Neither had Michael Ryan. I suppose the best known pacifist in Britain is the next person I talked to:

MONSIGNOR BRUCE KENT . . .

. . . is a personal chum of Billy Bragg, Pope John Paul II, myself and other holy men. He came down for a visit



Sir Clive Sinclair; has his ZX Spectrum computer become a festering wound of corruption?

recently, and over a glass of wine, (but no communion wafers), we took a look at *Deathwish 3*.

MEL - What sort of games did you play as a child?

BRUCE - Cowboys and Redskins.

MEL - That sounds violent.

BRUCE - Yes, I remember a bandage on a playmate's head, but mostly it was hide-and-seek, not killing games.

MEL - Why are violent computer games so popular?

BRUCE - Kids are encouraged, there's a business there. Something in human nature is violent, cruel, competitive and the software business has decided to exploit it. *Raid Over Moscow* ties in with insane Nationalism, it's frightful.

MEL - Let's keep off the nuclear bit today. You're reviewing *Deathwish 3* here, joystick in hand. What do you reckon?

BRUCE - I'm a Christian. Christmas is a time of reconciliation, peace making. If this is bought as a Christmas present I think it is



Monsignor Bruce Kent, personal chum of Pope John-Paul

outrageous. As a game I think it is a very, very dangerous perversion. It puts the idea into kid's minds that they can ignore the law, and sort people out by murdering them. We try to build a world of law, justice and judicial procedures, and this bypasses all of that. It turns a killer into a hero. Why aren't heroes champions of non-violence?

MEL - Mild-mannered Bruce Kent from the planet Krypton?

BRUCE - Seriously, I feel quite ill looking at this, I think it's dreadful. I think that the difference between this illusion and the reality of people going out on a killing spree is getting thinner and thinner all the time.

MEL - Give me evidence of that.

BRUCE - Nobody pays for the personal advertising poster I've got here unless it has results. I don't have any personal evidence. I certainly know of kids who have hung themselves after seeing it on TV. I read the papers . . . casual violence on our street, I just can't believe these games DO NOT affect people's behaviour!

MEL - This sort of game is about 'winning' about being aggressive, a world of male dominance. How can this stereotype be broken?

BRUCE - Produce games on a non-sexual basis, where your skill is about getting people out of danger, not murdering them.

MEL - Mild-mannered Lucy Kent from the planet Krypton?

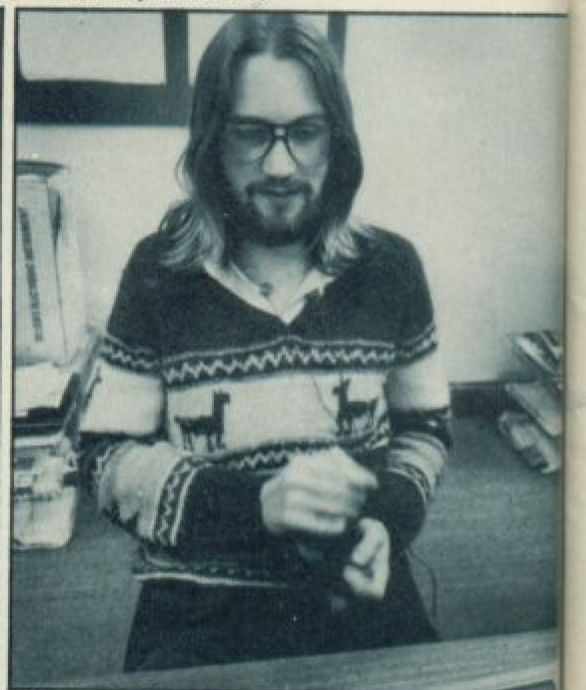
BRUCE - Rescuing a crashed aircraft, stop the assassination of Martin Luther King, there are so many alternatives. Why is the sense of challenge perverted like this? These games don't create violence, they ARE violent; full stop.

MEL - Don't you like computers very much?

BRUCE - We call 'security' being willing to murder millions of people – we sell weapons to anyone – but computers are neutral like any technology. It's how you use them. Like the telephone, you can plot a murder on it, you can plan a wedding on it, a computer itself is just neutral.

MEL - Always?

BRUCE - Except when I played computer tennis. It thrashed me. Non-violently of course!



Jeff Minter, the old llama-head with a heart of Floyd

JEFF MINTER

If Monsignor Kent's opinions were predictable, meeting with the old llama-head is never predictable:

MEL - If we can stop dancing a minute, give me words of wisdom about violence in your computer games.

JEFF - What do you reckon to the new Floyd, man?

MEL - Better than the new Roger Waters.

JEFF - I don't know, man, it depends which mood I'm in. Floyd are Megagods, let's have a party, man.

MAN, er . . . MEL - Talk about violence or I'll hit you.

JEFF - Yeah, love it. I've got some really heavy shoot-'em-ups. But I want to be abstract. Blobs, camels. I don't like games where you kill men, I hate it when they go 'eeaaauurgh!'. Can't relate to that. I like a good violent shoot-'em-up, but it's got to be abstract violence. Guns are bad news.

MEL - Guns in computer games are bad news? You mean for children?

JEFF - It's distasteful personally. I don't know how it affects children. For me it's bad news. I don't want no gut exploding.

" . . . the difference between this illusion and the reality of people going out on a killing spree is getting thinner . . . " MONSIGNOR BRUCE KENT

* Mel Croucher expects that many readers think he's a hypocritical cynic for accepting the *Deathwish 3* competition prize from Gremlin Graphics. Before you write in, Mel has told us that yes, he is a hypocritical cynic, but he has turned the Philips CD midi-system into three years of education for the eight-year-old child of an agriculture coolie, thanks to **Action Aid**. The child's name is Ashwathappa, and he doesn't care one iota about violence in computer games. He's too busy trying not to starve.

MEL - Are you aware of your responsibility to your admirers?
JEFF - I don't think about responsibility. I'm thinking what turns ME on. Fast! Loud! Zzapping aliens, man, that turns me on. Killing human images doesn't turn me on, but I'm not going to impose my views on anyone else.
MEL - Why not?
JEFF - I write games that I like. Weird people play them. I've got a weird following. I'm writing something on the ST now, huge amounts of megablasting, YEAAH!, love it, digitised llamas, very tasty.
MEL - Soundtrack by Pink Floyd?
JEFF - You ask 'em next time you see 'em. No, I'll ask Roger Waters myself, let's dance, man.

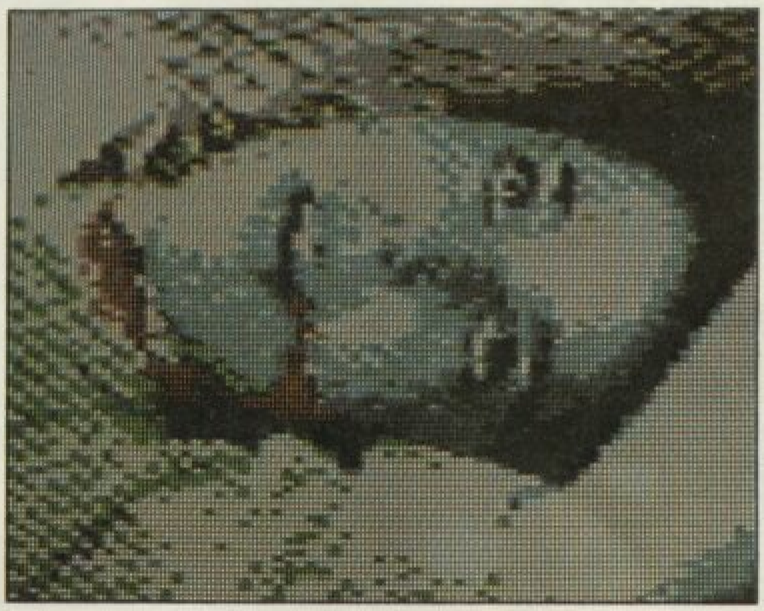
After such a serious input to the debate, I had to go and seek out someone really silly to balance this article. Why! If it isn't the second millionaire I've met today, the small but perfectly formed . . .

JEFFREY ARCHER . . .

. . . star of the High Court, Maggie Thatcher's breakfast table and the Dame Edna Everage show. Hi there Jeff! What do you know about computers?
JEFFREY - I can't type, I have no professional expertise at all. For *Not A Penny More, Not A Penny Less* I sought expert advice from my 13-year-old son, who plays computer games every week. I still can't work his Spectrum.
MEL - Yes, let's talk about William, your son. Do you allow your Willie to play violent games?
JEFFREY - I'm not conscious of any violent games William has. If he had any I wouldn't allow him to play them. Under no circumstances.
MEL - You are talking censorship, aren't you.
JEFFREY - In a democracy you can't go too far, you have to be very careful. I believe in parental control and self-restraint, yeah. But violence on television screens . . . I know the Prime Minister is worried, and rightly so. Even if it adds one percent to anyone's life being in danger, then it should be stopped.
MEL - So you do advocate censorship. Do you think that active participation in a violent computer game is more dangerous than passively watching a video?
JEFFREY - I've never thought about it before you said it, but yes, yes it would make one feel powerful, which can't be a good thing.
MEL - Power isn't a good thing?
JEFFREY - Not that sort of power.
MEL - What sort of power then, I mean, how can you stop your Willie playing these games in the privacy of his own room?
JEFFREY - I can't.
MEL - You don't have the power over him?
JEFFREY - You can only bring up your children in such a way that they reject these things for themselves.
How very true. Which brings us back to our lady child psychotherapist. Aggressive infant thugs learn their art from aggressive adult thugs. But let us move on to those other lady psychotherapists of software –

PRISCILLA & MARIANNE

– of St Bride's.
MEL - Let's talk about your computer nasty *Jack the Ripper.*
MARIANNE - I wondered if you were going to say that first.
MEL - Of course I was going to say that first, but if you prefer, let me ask you why you're wielding that cane?
MARIANNE - In case you get out of hand Mr Croucher.
PRISCILLA - She is prepared for you this time, so mind your manners and your language please.



MEL - Tell me why you've done *Jack the Ripper*?
PRISCILLA - He was a most unpleasant character, except that there was more than one of him.
MARIANNE - Two sugars please.
MEL - That's very bad for you. So is ripping the bowels out of women. I find that offensive.
PRISCILLA - Most people do don't they? We don't look at the pictures when we play the game. Rather unpleasant.
MEL - But it's equally unpleasant without the pictures.
PRISCILLA - As a matter of fact we don't read the gory bits either. Seriously, I was so upset by some of the scenes, I stopped programming for a while.
MARIANNE - We programmed it with our eyes open, but we play it with our eyes shut.
MEL - You've gone a long way from *The Snow Queen* haven't you?
PRISCILLA - No, it's exactly the same theme, the battle between Good and Evil.
MEL - Sorry, but I see a conflict here. You've done a piece of work, presumably for money, yet you can't bear to watch or read the violent bits yourselves. What about your little girl admirers?
PRISCILLA - Alfred Hitchcock favoured the kind of horror which makes you break out in a cold sweat, rather than the kind that makes you lose your breakfast. And I agree with him.
MEL - You haven't answered my question. Hitchcock-watching is a passive 'entertainment'; playing your *Jack The Ripper* is active participation.
MARIANNE - One doesn't take part in the violence; no attacking, murder, disembowelling. We don't approve of games where you play the killer.
PRISCILLA - Firstly, you are mistaken for the Ripper, then you pit your wits against him, or rather them. In actual fact the Ripper is a satanic cult, not mad, quite sane ritual murders.
MEL - Sane murders? Come on now!
PRISCILLA - Politics and black magic are closely connected, aren't they?
MEL - Why are you wearing two black veils?
PRISCILLA - I'm in mourning for Civilisation. All Civilisation.
(At this point CRL boss **CLEM CHAMBERS** *pops up from under the table) . . .*
CLEM - *Jack The Ripper* is not a video nasty. Those things are as horrible as they possibly can be. Our graphics are not the point of the game, they add to the atmosphere. A world without order, without reason, without justice, that's a video nasty. Don't forget our product will have a Censor's Certificate.
MEL - That is a very important point. Vital in fact. Whatever the software industry says, games now come under the law of the land.
PRISCILLA - I think *Jack The Ripper* is going to have an over-21 Certificate, the first product to get one, I think. And I'm glad about that. Yes, we do have a lot of little girls who follow our games, ages seven to twelve. I'd HATE to think of them misguidedly buying *The Ripper.*

"I was so upset by some of the scenes, I stopped programming for a while . . ." PRISCILLA OF ST BRIDES

I left the ladies of St Brides to the tender loving care of the Sunday tabloid reporters, and targeted the biggest man in software . . .

KEVIN TOMS

(Well, you try sharing a seat with a giant like Kevin).
MEL - I see the monitors have finally got to you. How long have you been wearing contact lenses?
KEVIN - Ha! Couple of years now, but not as a result of the screens. I wore glasses before.
MEL - I can't think of any product you've been involved with that features overt violence.
KEVIN - A tactical section in *President*, but you're right, not even crowd violence in *Football Manager.* It is just not interesting. I've got plenty of things I can write about without having to bother with all that rubbish. Strategy games are more involved with the cerebral and tactical side, rather than man-to-man killing.
MEL - Are those games dangerous?
KEVIN - No, I don't feel that killing little objects on screen leads to violence elsewhere. People know the difference between fantasy and reality.
MEL - What about the recent spate of deliberately gruesome advertising?
KEVIN - The gory posters? Yeah, I don't like them at all, but the kids seem to. When they're young they don't see it the way adults do. The blood and guts look great to them, it doesn't seem to bother them. When you get older you become more sensitive not less, because you understand the realities.
MEL - Would you be willing to write violent games in the future?
KEVIN - I am in a position now where

PRESS ANY KEY

I don't need to run a business, and I'm free to program what I want. It's my profession, and I don't need to use overt violence at all. Look at Codemasters, they sell squillions without resorting to computer nasties.

Which is exactly where I will look next.

DAVID & RICHARD DARLING . . .

. . . are the fraternal leaders of the Codemasters empire.

MEL - Have you, are you or will you ever, be involved with violent computer games?

RICHARD - We have shoot-'em-ups, but we don't involve people. Shapeless blobs and spaceships have no connection with real life. It doesn't make players more violent.

MEL - If you were approached to publish or write a *Rambo* or a *Barbarian* where you murder people that get in your way, what would you do?

RICHARD - We haven't ever done that.

MEL - What if they paid you lots of money? Lots and lots.

DAVID - *(long pause)* I think we would say no. We're coming up with loads of products, not violent, that sell very well. The worst type of game is where two people play at the same time in combat, trying to kill each other. Two people racing a BMX is just as skillful, but harmless, and a lot more enjoyable I think.

MEL - Have you ever been influenced by so-called violent games?

DAVID - I've never killed anybody. I don't know anyone who has.

RICHARD - I think it does affect people subtly. It might just push someone over the edge. Computer games are more interactive than videos, you get involved, especially, as David said, when you have two players against one another. They shout and swear all the time, it's a lot closer to real life than a space shoot-'em-up. If we were to change our graphics so you're killing babies it would make a lot of difference. It's the images that are important.

MEL - What about advertising graphics? What about *Rygar* with a saw blade ripping through human guts?

DAVID - We don't like to criticise our competitors, but I don't want to do things like that. We have a certain responsibility to our customers. We are aware of their age and how they can be influenced.

MEL - You take this very seriously, don't you?

RICHARD - We think of all the aspects when we buy a product, yes. Is it good enough and is it the type of product we want to be associated with in our range.

MEL - Do you play violent computer games?

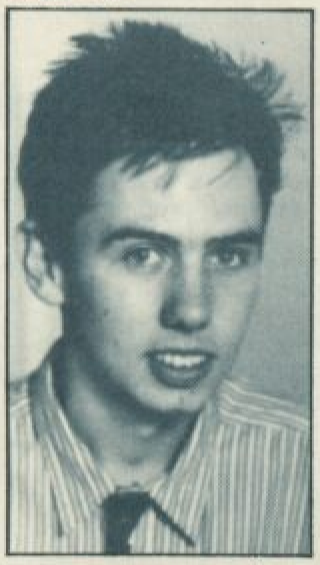
DAVID - In all honesty, no. Not since the original Melbourne House karate game.

RICHARD - And that wasn't too violent. They've got a whole lot worse since then, haven't they?

Well, folks I'm taking away valuable space from revolting adverts, and reviews of gruesome games, so just one more interview. And who better than the Supremo of Sickos, the furnace inside the Power House, the soft and cuddly . . .

"*Soft And Cuddly* is fantasy, something like *Deathwish 3* is a no-no. personally, I would never do it. You can quote me." ASHLEY HILDEBRANDT





Darlings both, Richard and David

"The worst type of game is where two people play at the same time in combat, trying to kill each other." DAVID DARLING

ASHLEY HILDEBRANDT

MEL - *Soft And Cuddly: The First Computer Nasty*, £1.99, and the front page of *The Star*.

ASHLEY - Be gentle with me, Mel. It was extremely unfortunate. We didn't plan it, but the press release got to them the day after Hungerford. People went apeshit, simple as that. *The Star* ran a piece saying that these kinds of computer games are turning people's minds, corrupting youth. Bloody Hell.

MEL - And, as usual, they hadn't seen the game, I know, it's happened to me. But isn't all publicity good publicity?

ASHLEY - In a sense, yes, but God forbid you think we'd want to trade on anything like Hungerford.

MEL - What if the game had been like *Rambo*?

ASHLEY - I'd have pulled it then and there.

MEL - You told me once that the most violent thing in *Soft And Cuddly* is bursting bubbles.

ASHLEY - Right. This game is non-violent. John Jones who wrote it is, er, um, 'eccentric'. He did *Go To Hell* for Activision yonks ago, and in this one you've got to find the various bits of your dead mother, who's been chopped to bits, stuffed in the fridge, and so on.

MEL - And that's non-violent. God help us if you ever go violent!

ASHLEY - It's warped, but I was very upset by the Hungerford flak we picked up. Very.

MEL - Your poster might suggest that *Soft And Cuddly* is somewhat violent. A pile of severed heads dripping blood.

ASHLEY - I suppose so, hahaha, you've got to sell the product, haven't you?

MEL - Trades Description Act? This is a violent poster selling a non-violent game?

ASHLEY - The poster implies gory violence. The creature's found a pile of heads and he's saying: 'Is this my mother?'

MEL - How's your Mum, Ashley?

ASHLEY - She's alright, bit of trouble with her ear at the moment.

MEL - In the fridge, is it?

ASHLEY - Seriously, I have published violent games, we all have, except yourself. But I would not run



something like *Rambo*. I do think the publisher has got to be responsible. *Soft And Cuddly* is fantasy, something like *Deathwish 3* is a no-no. Personally, I would never do it. You can quote me.

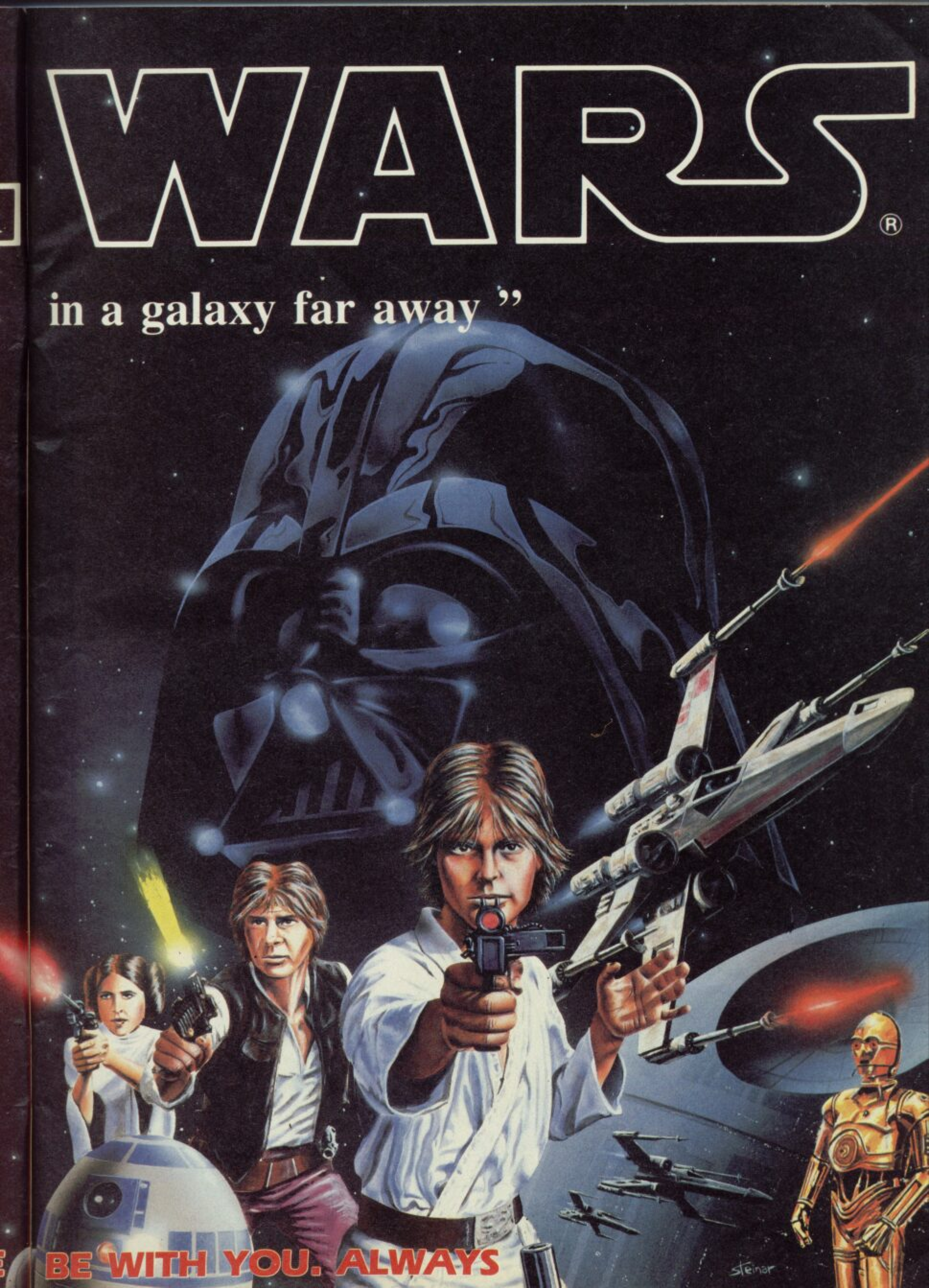
And so I have Ashley, so I have. Well, it is not the function of a humble writer to impose his own views on an item like this, but I have never been humble, and I don't give a monkey's about challenging people I disagree with. As we approach the Christmas software bonanza, I would ask the following groups to consider these requests:

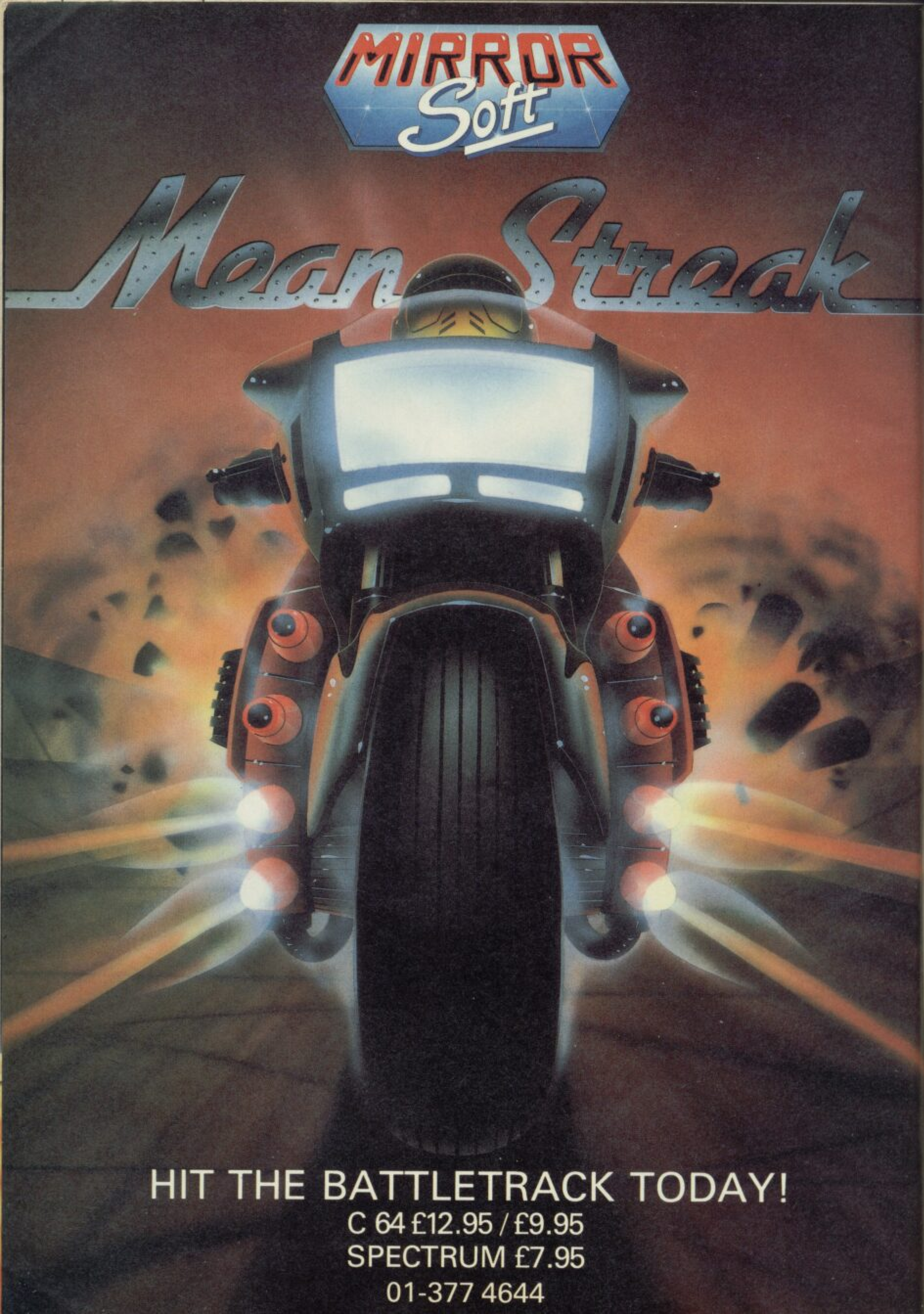
PROGRAMMERS: Your influence over children is real and important. Why not be constructive instead of destructive?

MAGAZINES: How repulsive does advertising have to get before you refuse to take the advertisers's money?

THE TRADE: If you are in the business of flogging software to kids that glorifies selfishness and brutality, never ever shoot your mouth off if you suffer abuse of your person or property, because you, my friends, are not without blame.

EVERYONE: When governments start banning things 'for your own good' we all lose another little bit of our freedom. If you start burning books, videos and computer games you don't approve of, you end up burning people you don't approve of. Ask the witches, Catholics, South Africans and the author of my first quote. When it comes to computer software, we don't need censorship, we need self-respect. Happy Christmas everyone.


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the GAMES machine
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REVIEWS

The next 38 pages are the core of THE GAMES MACHINE, where you will find the most informative and detailed selection of games reviews in any multi-user computer magazine, with games not just reviewed on one machine – but every version. And if a version is not completed, we will do our best to tell you about its progress. No longer do you have to read a Spectrum game review in anticipation, only to discover that when it is published for your IBM PC it turns out to be entirely different and less satisfying – we will tell you about each version as and when we see it.

VERSION UPDATES

And when a version which has already been reviewed on other machines is finished we will give you the full low down and rating in a Version Update. In the first issue of THE GAMES MACHINE, Version Updates were in a section of their own, but from now on, you will find them treated as reviews in the main section which follows.

THE EXPANDING PC

And talking of PC compatibles, you will find three reviews of PC games – and there are more lined up for the next issue. The market for PC games is growing but **Mirrorsoft** say that it is 'a market that hasn't really sorted itself out.' For the recently converted *Defender Of The Crown*, Mirrorsoft hope to sell 2,500 copies. Meanwhile, **Ocean** appear quite happy: 'We're pleased with the initial reaction,' comments sales manager Paul Patterson, 'and we're continuing to support it with *Arkanoid*, which is just released, and *Wizball* isn't far off.

So, which games are worth writing on your Christmas shopping list? To help you find out THE GAMES MACHINE reviewing team this month consists of Nik Wild, Robin Hogg, Richard Eddy, Mark Rothwell and Robin Candy.

LEAD REVIEWS

DRILLER

Incentive has been working on the *Driller* project for over 14 months and now it comes alive on Spectrum and Amstrad CPC – and it's big!

PAGE 38

DARK SCEPTRE

From **Firebird** comes another magnificent creation by **Mike Singleton**, creator of *Lords Of Midnight*, *Doomdark's Revenge* and *Throne Of Fire*. An ingenious combination of strategy and action makes *Dark Sceptre* one of the most involved games seen on the Spectrum.

PAGE 55

BARBARIAN

This has been available for a while, but the magical, graphical 16-bit arcade-adventure from **Psygnosis** with its novel control method and horrors that would make your granny scream, deserves more attention that it has received.

PAGE 67

THROUGH THE TRAPDOOR

Piranha deal goods again with this sequel to their biggest seller, *Trapdoor*. Again, starring Berk and Drutt the, sequel brings more action with the same endearing **Don Priestley** graphics.

PAGE 77

REVIEWS SUMMARY

PRESS ANY KEY

NEW BALLS PLEASE!

THE BREAKOUT GAME

Various

Balls are a bit 'in' at the moment. Especially, it would appear, when they are smashing multicoloured bricks to pieces. *Breakout* clones are suddenly appearing in vast quantities and spreading faster than *Wordstar* or *Knight Lore* clones did. **Richard Eddy** gives a personal run-down . . .

Taito, the company which produced the corky coin-op *Arkanoid*, are probably to blame for unleashing the craze, and then Ocean for producing a series of very competent conversions for the home micros. The ST version is undoubtedly the superior, retaining all of the arcade's original features – if it wasn't for the small screen you could almost think it was the arcade original. Imagine have just released it for the IBM PC.

Following in Ocean's footsteps came Gremlin's *Krackout*, which was somewhat jollier but slower and really didn't have the addictiveness *Arkanoid* provided.

Not to be outdone Elite shoved in their fourpenneth in the shape of *Batty* which now features on *Hit Pak 2*. Written by an ex-Ultimate programmer, *Batty* was polished and showed greater graphical sophistication than *Arkanoid*.

And then everyone breathed a sigh of relief thinking that it was over . . .

'Not on your nelly!' shouted Audiogenic, Alligata, Pirate and CRL in unison, all proffering their latest versions which are: *Impact*, *Addictaball*, *Smash Out!* and *Ball Breaker*.

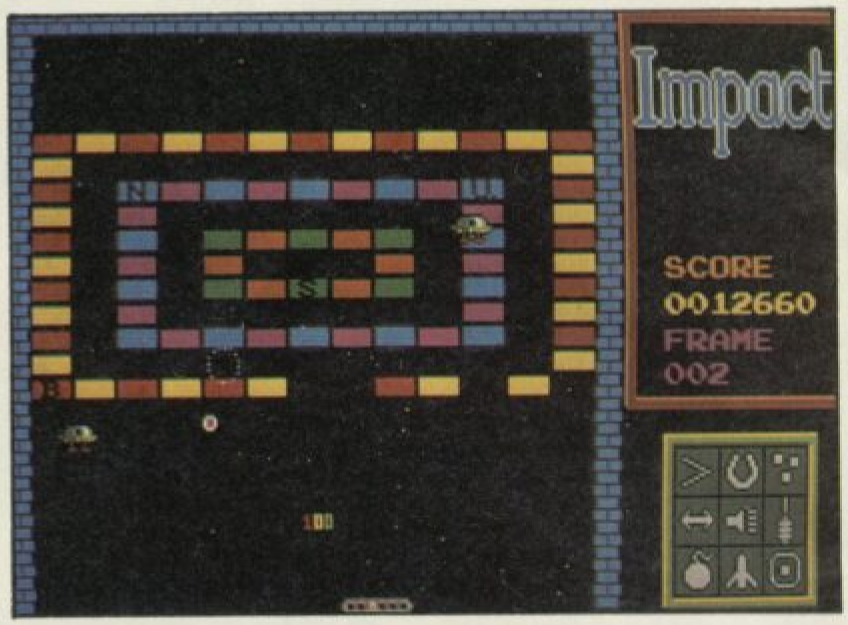
Apart from the games, comparing inlay storylines proves most interesting. Pirate's budget *Smash Out!* goes for a desperately-try-to-be-convincing story where the bat is supposed to be a spaceship lost in space and bricks are blobs of plasma, while *Ball Breaker* claims the ball is some chappie called Ovoid on a mission of annihilation. Personally I prefer Impact's 'Trapped in a 1970s arcade machine . . .' or Alligata's straight for the throat approach with '. . . I have difficulty imagining a bat is a spaceship . . . so let's call things a bat, ball and bricks – it's much easier!' And so it is.

I think you can quite happily disregard *Smash Out!*; it is little more than a poor man's *Arkanoid* with measly graphics, nauseous sound and the adictiveness of drying paint. Okay, so it may have screen designer thrown in, but even this is fiddly to use and does nothing to push up *Smash Out!*'s credibility.

NOVELTY

There's a lesson to learn here – if you are going to produce a clone you have to do it very well, or devise a novel twist on the formula. Which is what CRL did with *Ball Breaker*, originally released for the Amstrad CPC range, it took *Breakout* into 3-D and worked well with some great sound effects and a colourful layout. *Ball Breaker* is just released for the Spectrum and retains its playability – although to avoid colour clash the monochromatic graphics can make it difficult to see exactly where to position your bat. Complete with all the typical features, it also includes a laser gun which stays with you throughout the game. *Ball Breaker* adds up to a worthwhile buy if you fancy a different twist on the rest – and soon to be available on the Atari ST and Amiga.

Audiogenic, quiet for some time, return to our 16-bit screens with the elaborate *Impact* for the Atari ST and Amiga (and hopefully soon for the Spectrum and Commodore 64/128). *Impact* is quite the connoisseur's *Arkanoid* cleverly topped off by some great sounds



Audiogenic's Impact – a colourful ST screen

(each brick, alien and the bat produces an individual sound, so occaisionally it sounds like a decent tune gone wonky!). Graphically, it is what you would



expect from 16-bit, utilising colour very well and sharp definition to add that extra bit of class to the aliens.

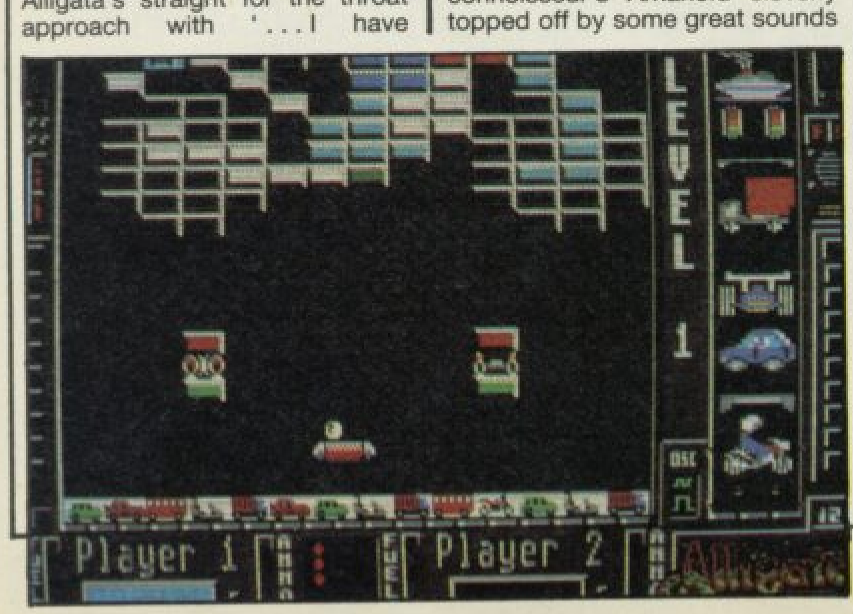
THE LARGEST

What gives it that little extra push is the novel way in which features, such as lasers, bat expand and catch are collected – á la *Nemesis*. Yellow tokens spin down from selected bricks when destroyed and, if collected, are stored in the power select pad at the bottom right-hand corner of the screen. Pressing the mouse button when one is collected makes the ball slow down, collecting two and then pressing the button gives you the catch effect and so on through divide (3 balls), expand, torch (to see hidden bricks), laser, smart bomb (to destroy aliens), missile and forcefield, which doesn't have the rebound effect off bricks, but simply continues to smash its way round the screen until hitting a wall where it bounces off.

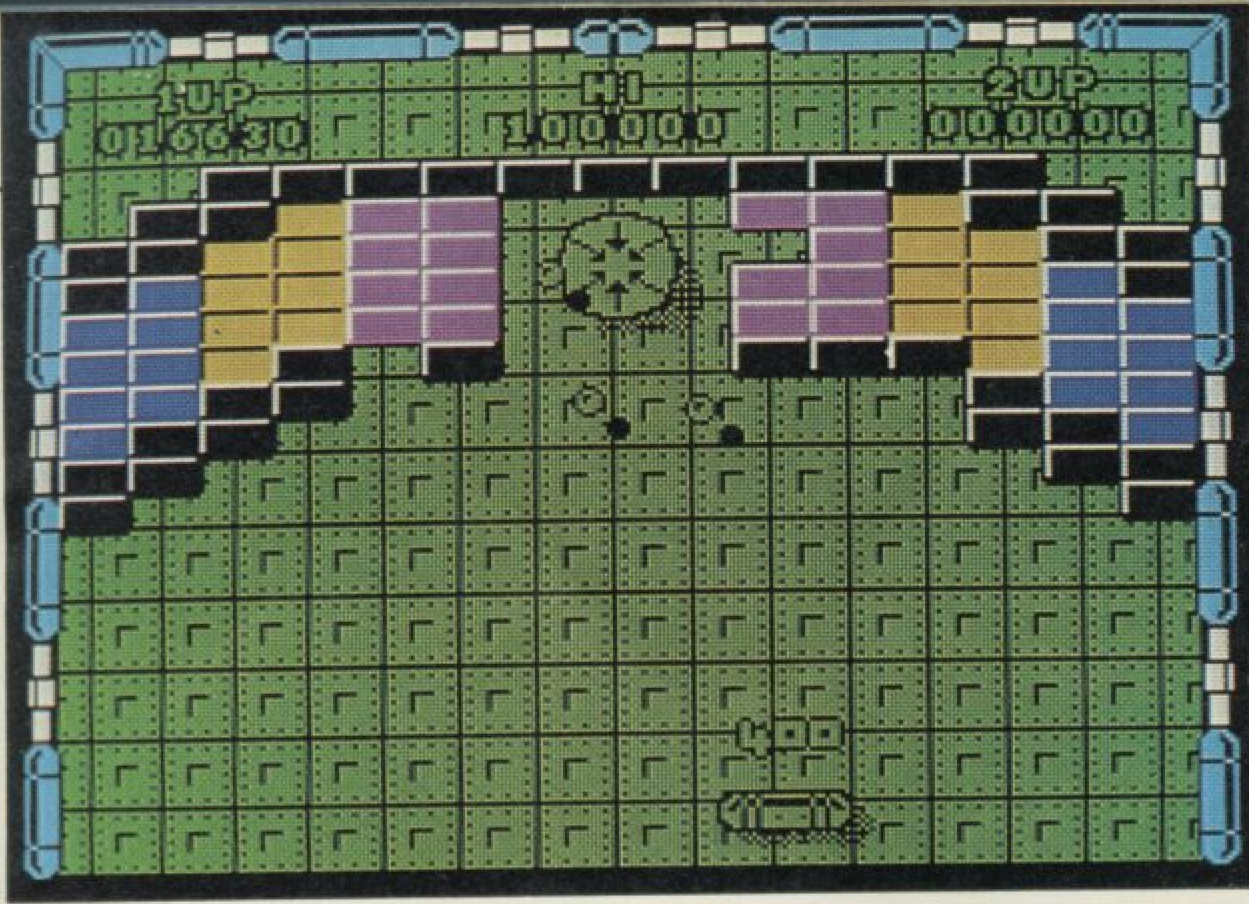
With 80 screens and 48 more you can design yourself using the easy-to-use screen designer, *Impact* definitely wins my approval as being the best just for sheer addictiveness.

But coming a close second is *Addictaball* from Alligata, which doesn't quite make it to the very top for the simple reason that it falls down on presentation and graphics. The use of colour is very dull on the first levels – mainly greys, greens, and blues used for the bricks and surroundings – which doesn't do much to create an exciting atmosphere.

However, *Addictaball* proves to be quite novel in the way the bricks slowly scroll down the screen in one long trail – its great saving grace. The trail can prove to be frustrating when, having died, you are returned to the beginning, or one of the internal stages within a level. Two weapons, laser gun and



Right at the start, and it's high time to knock out the laser blocks at the left and right if you want the force to be with you – Atari ST screen



thruster (which allows you to move up and down the screen) can be collected at the very beginning, though they have to be replenished frequently by hitting the correct bricks.

Along the bottom of the screen is a barrier preventing the ball from disappearing but this gradually gets destroyed by the shower of fireballs which come down the screen, unless the fireballs are destroyed with the bat before they reach the bottom. There are cars, bikes and the like to be battered along the way which, if nothing else, adds a bit of humour to the game.

So, now what? Do we dare breathe a sigh of relief or is the next parcel we open going to be *Revenge Of The Mutant Bouncing Balls From Jupiter . . .* ?

STOP PRESS! No relief breathing yet! We have just received *Reflex* from Players priced at £1.99 for the MSX . . . !

"Impact definitely wins my approval as being the best just for sheer addictiveness."

AVAILABILITY AND RATINGS

IMPACT (Audiogenic)
Atari ST (£14.95) **91%**
Amiga (£14.95) **90%**
Commodore 64/128
Spectrum

ADDICTABALL (Alligata)
Atari ST (£14.95) **80%**
Spectrum (£7.95)
Commodore 64 (£7.95)
MSX (£7.95)

SMASH OUT! (Pirate)
Spectrum (£1.99) **15%**

ARKANOID (Ocean)
Spectrum (£7.95) **71%**
Commodore 64/128 (£9.95) **87%**
Amstrad CPC (£8.95) **86%**
Atari ST (£14.95) **89%**

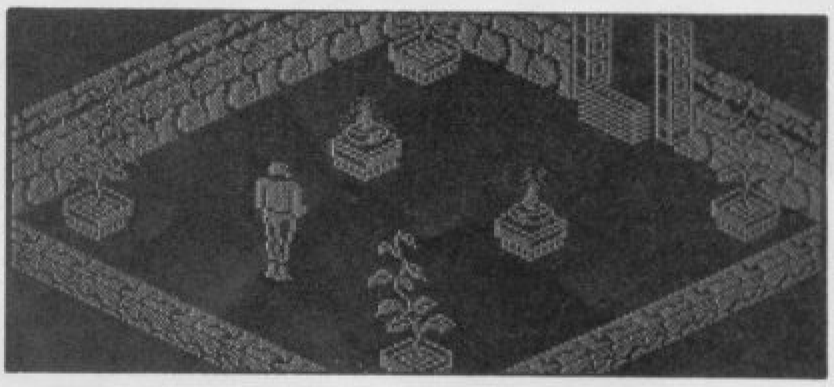
KRACKOUT (Gremlin)
Spectrum (£7.95) **42%**
Commodore (£9.95) **51%**
Amstrad (£8.95) **50%**

BATTY (On Hit Pak 2 by Elite)
Spectrum (£9.95) **78%**
Amstrad (£9.95) **75%**
Commodore (£9.95)

PRESS ANY KEY

MOVIE MISSION

PHANTOM CLUB
Imagine

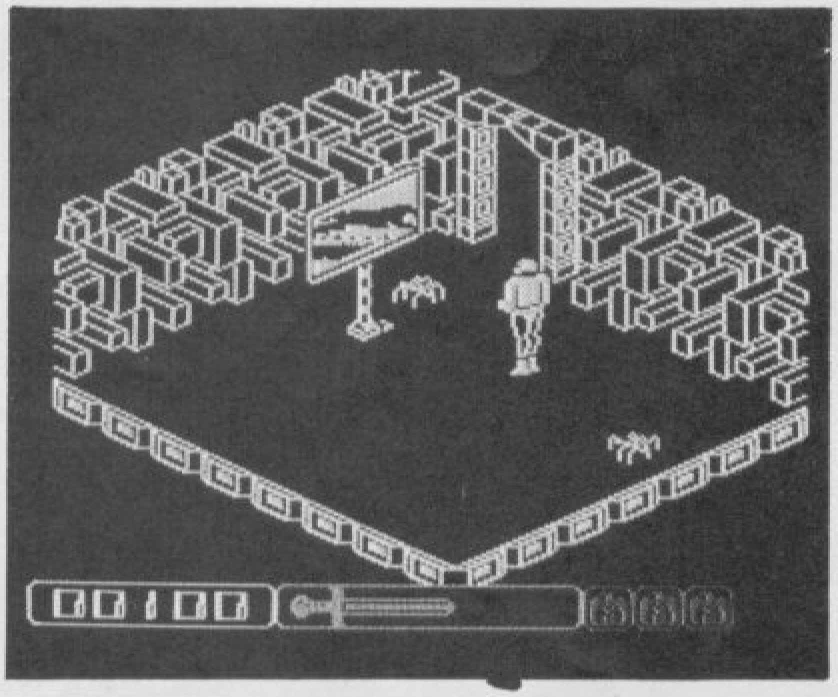


Dusko Dimitrijevic is a name to be reckoned with, if only because it is difficult to pronounce. This young programmer comes from Yugoslavia, and the first major game he wrote, *M.O.V.I.E*, was a huge hit. That was in March 1986 and we have had to wait awhile for the second, which is a follow up in style but not in theme.

Many years ago, a group of superheroes possessed with strange and deadly powers banded together and formed the Phantom Club. The overlord, Zarg, developed an evil streak, and over the years managed to persuade the other members to practise his nasty ways . . . all except for Plutus. The club split up, and now disapproving Plutus finds himself facing an evil band of warriors, all as powerful as himself. Playing Plutus, it is up to you to defeat the band and destroy Zarg.

You start the game as Zelator, lowest rank of the brotherhood, and aim to rise through the ranks (ten in all) to attain that of Ipsisimus; only then will you be able to defeat Zarg and restore the club's good name. To do this, you must explore the club's many rooms, overcome devious traps and puzzles, and complete the various missions that have been set, while coping with your former colleagues whom Zarg sends after you.

The *Phantom Club* is instantly recognisable as being from the hands of *M.O.V.I.E.*'s creator, the design of the isometric perspective rooms inevitably recalling the earlier game. But despite the similarities, *Phantom Club* is an enjoyable experience because the problems facing the player are wholly new. Pay no attention to your special power of 'Brainstorm' – a bolt of psychic force you shoot from your head – it is just a laser gun in different guise, and has much the same effect on baddies when it hits them, although some need more than one shot; but the use of movie screens (a back reference?) in when blasted, earn bonus scores. The game provides one mission per ranking, accessed by shooting at a movie screen, if you have not reached the ranking and number of points necessary to undertake a mission you are informed – it requires at least 40,000 points to start the first mission for instance, and the aim of the mission . . . ? That is for you to find out.



some rooms, which provide essential information on your mission, is a genuinely fine element, and the frantic search to find the one necessary to enable completion of the mission for your next ranking gives the game that 'just one more go' feeling.

That, and the combination of more usual arcade-adventure elements: extra lives can be obtained by touching floating spheres, others provide extra speed, and spinning spheres,

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £7.95

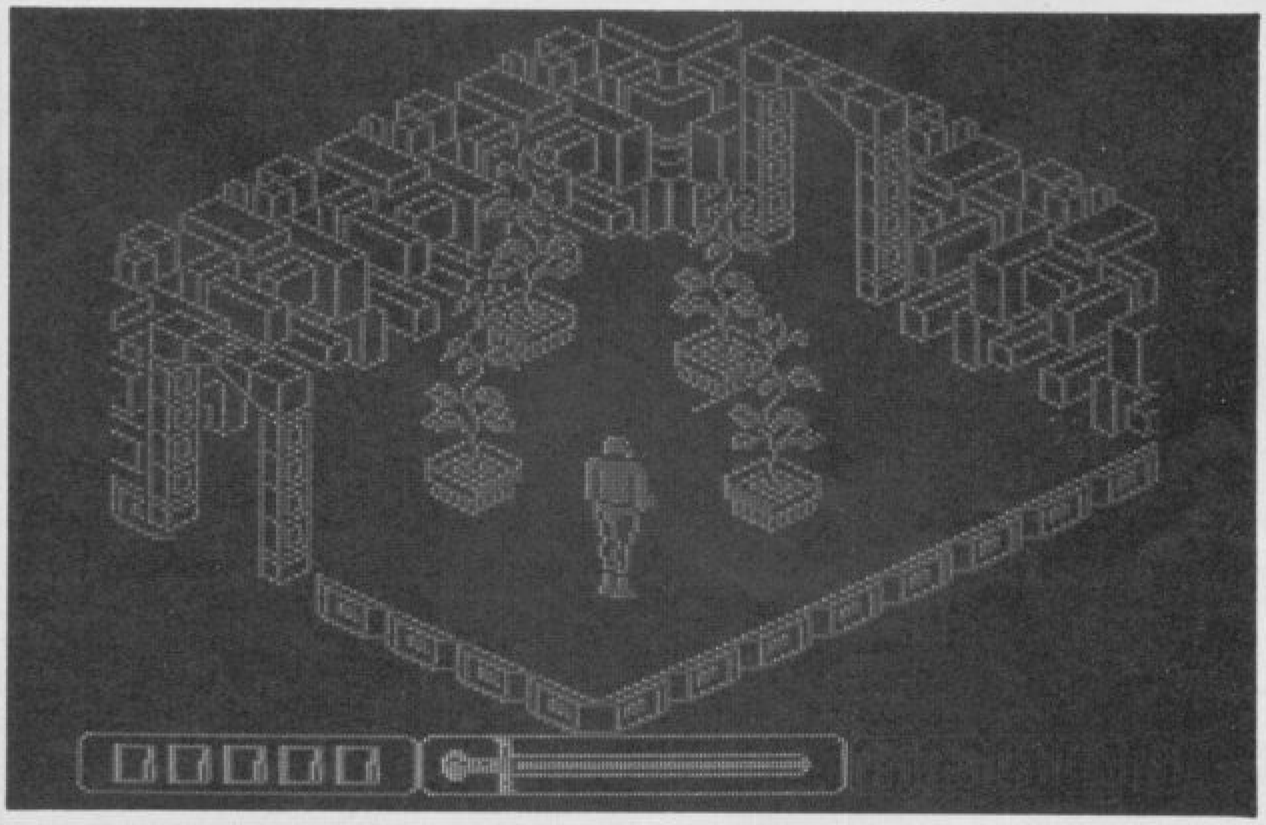
This is the ideal sort of presentation for the Spectrum, and so the graphics look good and work well. The sound is acceptable, with a nice tune on the intro and end screens. Gameplay is compelling, even addictive. Don't expect this to be another M.O.V.I.E., **because it is not, and perhaps not quite as exciting either, but nevertheless it is a worthy successor.**

OVERALL 78%

AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95

Plays exactly the same as on the Spectrum, but the appearance is brightened with colour – sometimes too much, and when rooms have an eye-wrenching colour scheme it makes the baddies hard to see.

OVERALL 75%



" . . . the frantic search to find the mission for your next ranking gives the game that 'just one more go' feel-ing."



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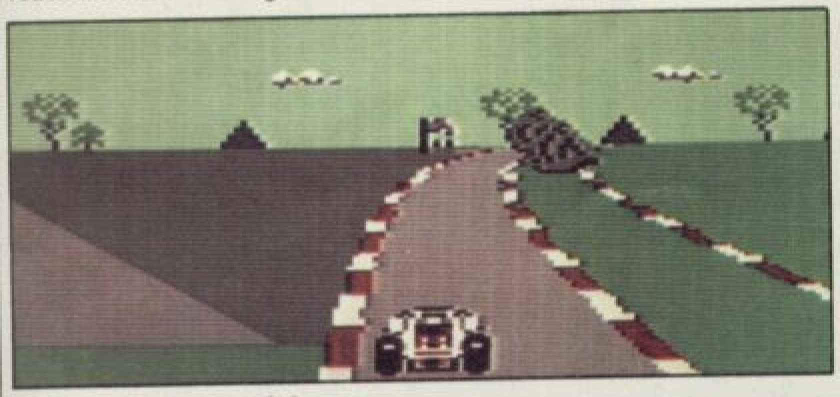

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GET DOWN AND BUGGY

BUGGY BOY
Elite Systems

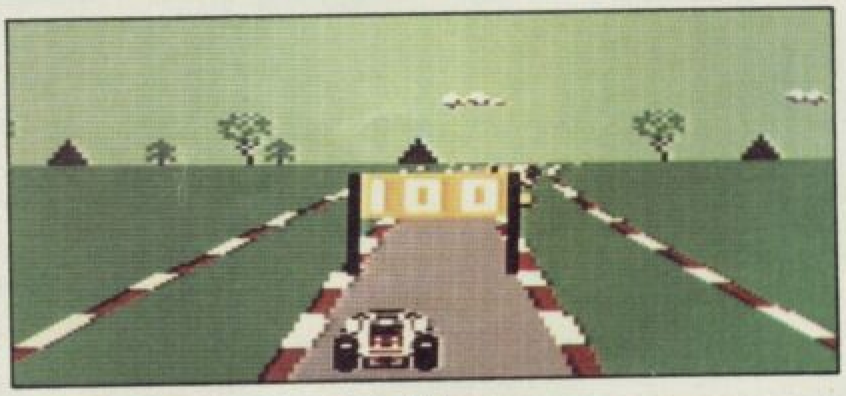
Many moons ago, **Elite** opted for the battle to secure coin-op licences, and when measured against their opponents in the race they have had a fair measure of success with the finished results, undoubtedly topping out with *Ghosts 'n' Goblins. Space Harrier* fared less well than they would have liked on the 8-bit machines, but (see previews) it looks like a winner on the Atari ST. Now comes the **Taito** car racing game *Buggy Boy* across most popular formats, Commodore first, ST next, and the rest to follow very soon.

Buggy Boy is a race against the clock around five courses, with obstacles to be jumped and negotiated, whilst collecting bonuses along the way in a bid to reach a distant finishing line.

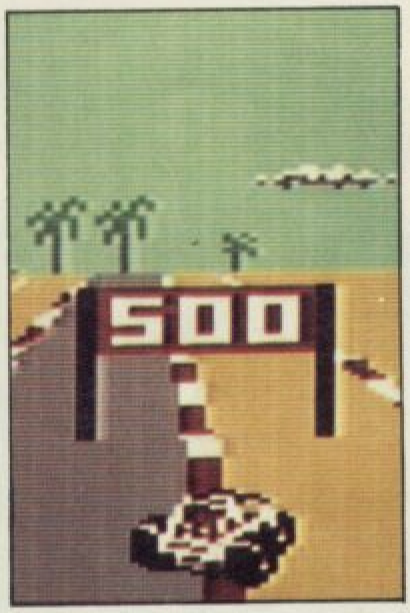


At the beginning of the game, the player can select a course to be tackled. They can be played in any order but the overall game objective is to complete all five tracks. The car is equipped with the standard low and high gears, activated at the press of the fire button, as well as an ever-useful set of brakes for getting out of tricky situations. Once the green light goes on, put that foot down on that accelerator!

Scattered around the tracks in awkward places are all sorts of obstacles, ranging from fences, trees and rocks to barrels, bushes and walls. Valuable time is wasted if the car collides with any of them. Running over logs lying in the road causes the car to jump (useful for avoiding course hazards), running over molehills tips your buggy onto two wheels, allowing passage through tight places.



Bonus point gates can be driven through, each giving between 100 and 500 points, with time-gates adding extra time to the clock. Completing a stage of the course gives a set time bonus and an extra two seconds for each time-gate driven through. Flags awarding points can be collected by driving over them, with an extra bonus to be gained if they are collected in the correct order. Ramming a football on the racecourse also earns extra points.



A huge hit on the 64, Buggy Boy

All the features of the original are present, the buggy can cross bridges, roar through dark tunnels and drive along on the slopes of roadside hills.

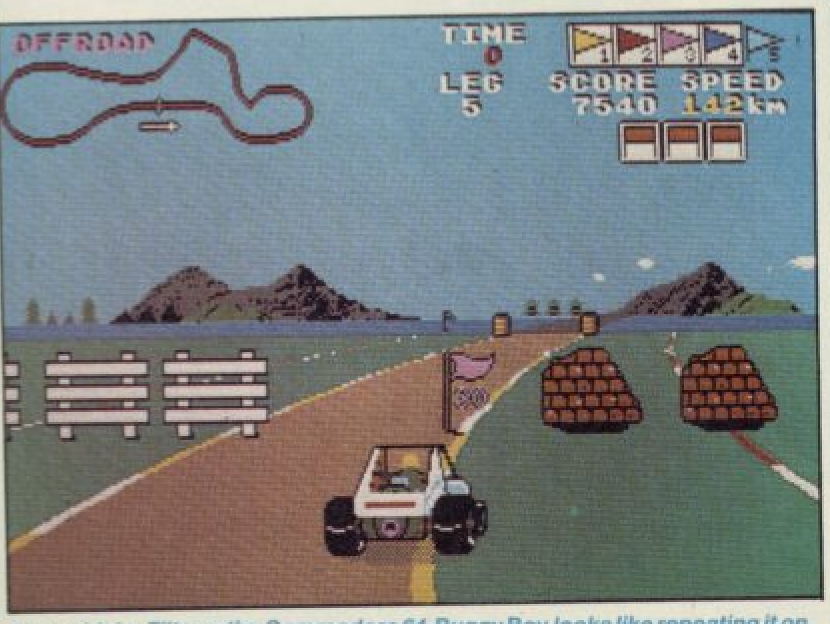
COMMODORE 64 / 128
Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

Elite have done an absolutely excellent job with Buggy Boy**. The graphics are superb and the game is extremely playable right from the start. Sound effects are put to good use and the game moves along at a furious pace. The torturous and varied courses will keep even the most hardened 64 arcadester playing for ages.** Buggy Boy **has only two faults: one is the lack of a decent title screen tune and the other is the size of the electricity bill you are likely to rack up playing it.**

OVERALL 92%

ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.95

Given that the unfinished version we saw still allowed the buggy to go through brick walls, tunnels and other objects without harm (!), it is only fair to say that it looks as perfect to the original as it is possible to be. Elite are still doing quite a lot to the sound, which was quite basic, adding more effects and music to enhance the game. This looks as though it is going to be the version to beat them all.



A huge hit for Elite on the Commodore 64, Buggy Boy looks like repeating it on the Atari ST, a screen of which is shown here

AMSTRAD
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95 Disk

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £7.95
+3 Diskette: £14.95

The Amstrad version might have to watch its scrolling, but the colour-clashless Spectrum version should be perfectly acceptable, and on the 128 with extra sound may well better other road racer greats like Enduro Racer**. Version updates soon.**

"Elite have done an excellent job . . . Buggy Boy **will keep even the most hardened arcadester playing for ages."**

DRIBBLE TROUBLE

BASKET MASTER
Imagine

The fourth **Dinamic** release through Imagine is a one-on-one basketball simulation based around the exploits of **Fernando Martin**, one of the world's top players. First out is the Amstrad CPC version, with other 8-bit formats following as fast as possible. Coding and graphics by Dinamic themselves, except for the Commodore, which is by **Martin McDonald** (also working on *Platoon*) and **Gary Besillo**.

The game can be played by one against the computer or two people head-to-head on three levels of play: beginner, amateur and NBA (National Basketball Association level).

Below the main playing area the status panel comprises an energy bar, a personal foul counter, player's present score, and a timer that keeps track of each five-minute time period – a match consists of two such periods. There are several ways of scoring points, 'baskets' (a straight throw within the goal zone), 'slam dunks' (jumping up close and slamming the ball in) and 'rebounds' (speak for themselves) all score two points, while a throw from outside the goal area – a 'three point shot' – scores, suitably, three points.

Slam dunks are the only type of 'basket' that is rewarded with a close up, slow motion action replay. When your opponent has control of the ball, however, you are not entirely helpless, watch the personal foul counter carefully, and you will see a small basketball icon appear when you are in range to steal the ball from him, though watch you don't foul your him as you are disqualified if you do this too often. A much safer way to repossess the ball is to intercept your opponent as he throws for goal . . . although given half a chance he will do the same to you.

The inevitable problem with sports simulations is that they tend only to appeal to those who really enjoy the particular sport, possibly excepting the furious joystick-wagglers like *Daley Thompson* et al. So unless the implementation is exceptional, the game is unlikely to have mass appeal, and in the case of *Basket Master* it really is too hard to play and too slow to watch to completely succeed. Added to that, Fernando Martin is a great slam dunker, and you are often left helpless as action replay follows action replay – an unremitting sight that tends to tedium rather quickly. Better played with two humans then.





AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95

Reasonable graphics are spoiled by the naff slow motion replay, the players judder and flicker across the screen atrociously. Even on beginner level it is pretty hard to hang onto the ball for very long, and this causes a deal of mounting frustration. Probably a simulation best left to real fans of the sport.

OVERALL 45%

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £7.95

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: 12.95

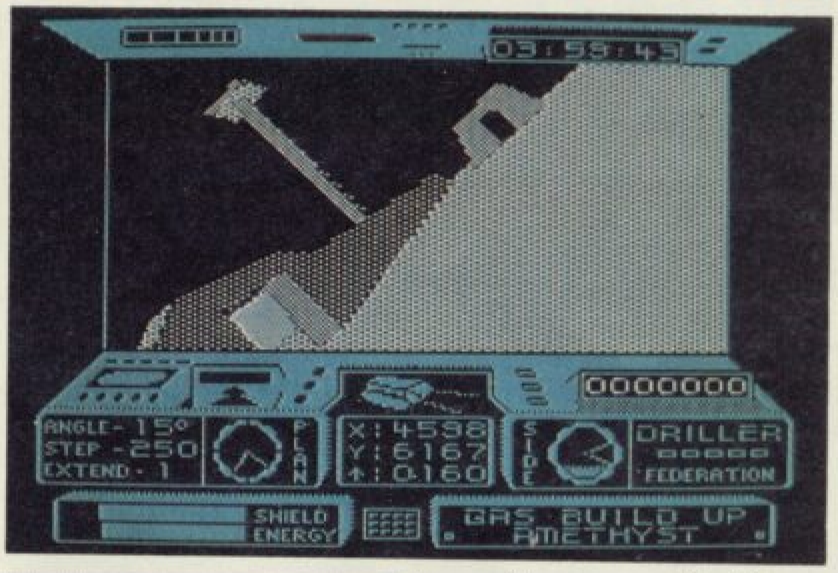
Both should be ready by December. As the Spectrum Basket Master **is coded by Dinamic, expect it to be as hard as the Amstrad version. The Commodore one might be a touch more playable, but will have to work all the harder to appeal as there have already been several such simulations, one or two really quite enjoyable.**

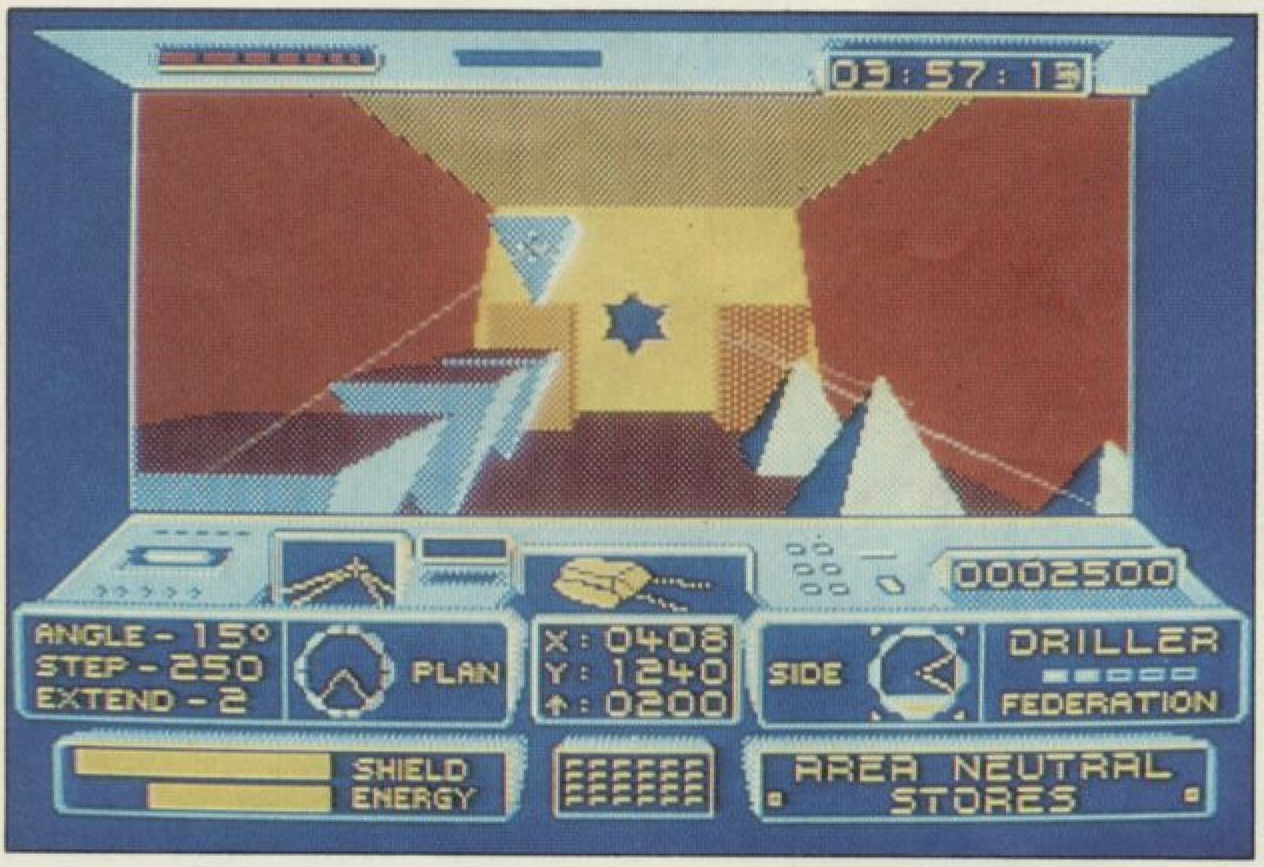
" . . . Basket Master **really is too hard to play and too slow to watch to completely succeed.**"

RIGGED FOR DESTRUCTION

DRILLER
Incentive Software

Incentive's *Driller* project has taken over 14 months to come to life, most of that time being spent on the highly effective solid 3-D graphics routine **Freescape**, created by Incentive's in-house team **Major Developments.** The amount of time and effort put into *Driller* has paid off and the end result is something no 8-bit owner should be without this Christmas. The package, a large box including a 3-D map construct, comes with a hefty instruction manual, and within its covers lies a novella telling the story of events leading up to the action within the game . . .





The planet Evath has two moons, Mitral and Tricusip. The Ketars who lived on Mitral had set up 18 enormous platforms to mine for Rubicon crystals – a natural source of energy used both on the moon and on Evath. However their mining techniques were primitive and before long great pockets of gas built up. Aware of the danger the Ketars fled.

Now an even greater danger than the potential gas explosions threatens, a comet is heading towards Mitral. Though its collision with the uninhabited moon would normally have been of little consequence, Evathian scientists fear that with the gas build up it could act as a trigger and set off the explosion of Mitral, throwing Evath disastrously off its solar orbit.

You are assigned the mission to make safe all of the 18 sectors on Mitral by positioning drilling rigs over each of the gas pockets to burn off the gas and ensure that when the comet hits it will have no serious effect upon Evath . . . and it is due in four hours.

DRILLING

The game begins as you land on the first of Mitral's 18 sectors, Amethyst, on board your transportation vehicle. This is similar to a tank equipped with a laser and teleporting device for the drilling rigs.

Discovering where to place the drilling rigs on each sector ranges from being downright easy – there is a big X on the first sector – to being pot lock. When a drilling rig is placed the status screen informs whether gas been found and what percentage can be burnt off. For a drilling to be successful the burn-off must be over 50%.

The vehicle's energy is limited, but it can be replenished by collecting Rubicon crystals which resemble pyramids. Upturned crystals restore energy and base-down crystals restore the shield surrounding the craft.

Planting rigs may appear a tedious application, but what makes *Driller* so intriguing, apart from the graphics, are the marvellous cryptic puzzles. It is quite possible to forget about drilling and instead explore the planet searching for switches. Switches, usually found in the shape of cubes, are activated by firing at them, which often has some effect, such as opening secret doors or operating lifts.

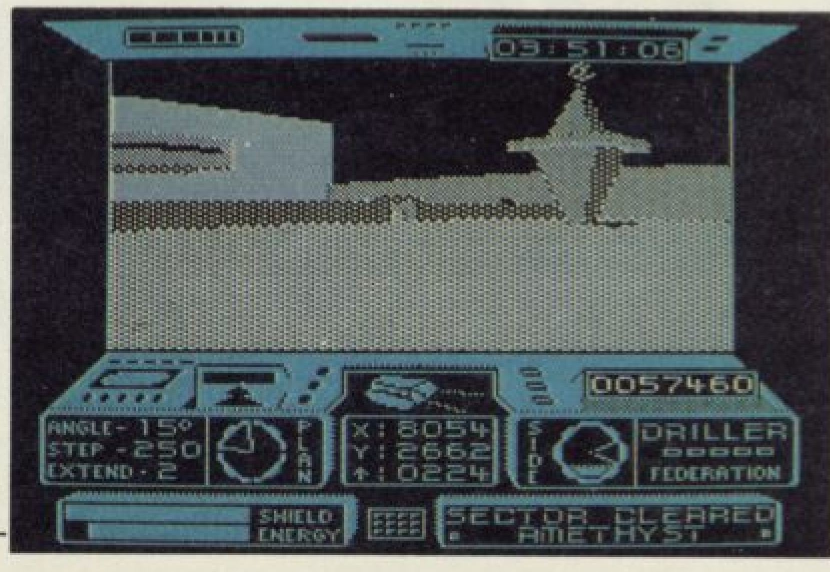
FLYING ROUND

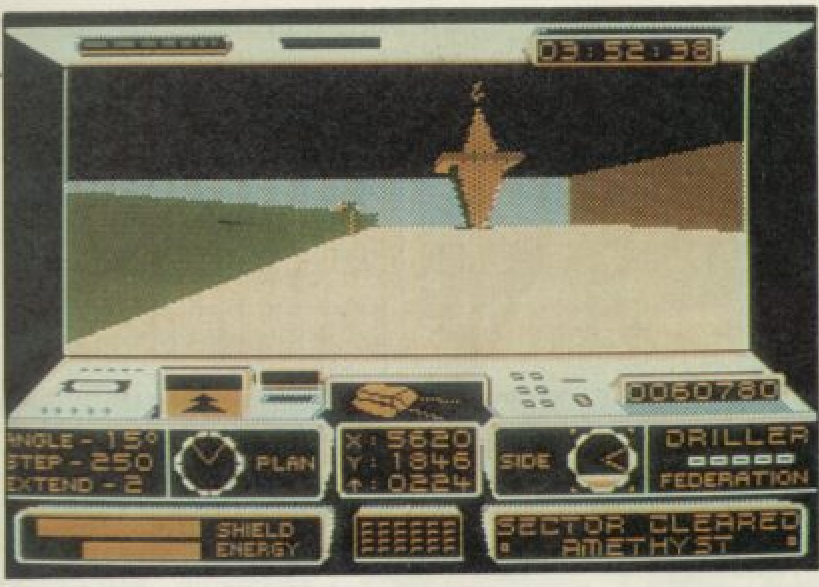
Unlike many games, the puzzles are not obvious in their appearance – the installation of a teleport system is a good example; early in the game you may find a room with four cubes. Eliminating them in a specific order sets up the teleport system, which you may well later discover in a few of the sectors.

Mitral's automatic defences still operate so travel is quite hazardous. Ketar lasers can be destroyed, changed in position or at least switched off, though some continue firing and dodging quickly past is the only possible avoidance.

Mapping Mitral is essential, though difficult from within the tank, but somewhere the Ketars left a jet behind which you can use. It operates similarly to your ground vehicle but of course it can fly and skim over many sectors – it is, however, impossible to position oil rigs using the jet.

Freescape, the technique where all the 3-D graphics remain solid in every perspective, works extremely well, creating a real sense of exploring the unknown. Admitedly it *is* slightly jerky but that subtracts nothing from the gameplay, and it can be made smoother by altering the step size. The highest step is 250, but it can





be taken down to just one, although this renders it very slow.

Freescape is a great achievement, and with the addition of *Driller*'s huge scenario, innovative ideas and involving gameplay, the whole package offers a bundle of entertainment to take you through this Christmas – and probably the next one!

AMSTRAD CPC

Cassette: £14.95
Diskette: £17.95

The Amstrad's benefit is the colour; using mode 1 (four colours) and a variety of shading techniques the colour comes alive, and makes close together blocks much easier to see than the on Spectrum. There's no music, which is unfortunate and the FX are little more than warning or explosive noises, but Driller has first-time excitement and long term playability. Definitely not to be missed.

OVERALL 95%

SPECTRUM 48/128

Cassette: £14.95
+3 Diskette: £17.95

Very much the same as on the Amstrad apart from the colour – although the shading works to an almost sinister effect – which because there is less to shift around means the Spectrum version runs slightly faster (even more so on the +3). And no multiloads; it is all squeezed into one 48K load – a considerable achievement for such a mammoth game. At a time when innovation seems halted, Driller not only makes a welcome change but also an excellent one.

OVERALL 94%

COMMODORE 64/128

Cassette: £14.95
Diskette: £17.95

Already well underway, Commodore Driller should be out a month after the Spectrum and Amstrad release. It uses solid colours rather than shading and includes an eight-minute theme tune.L look out for a version update next issue for the full assessment.

16-BIT

Incentive have planned Amiga and ST versions of Driller for 1988 and they promise to be faster than on 8-bit. Work has only just begun but we will try for a preview in the next issue.

"Freescape **is a great achievement . . .** Driller**'s huge scenario and involving gameplay offers a bundle of entertainment . . .** "

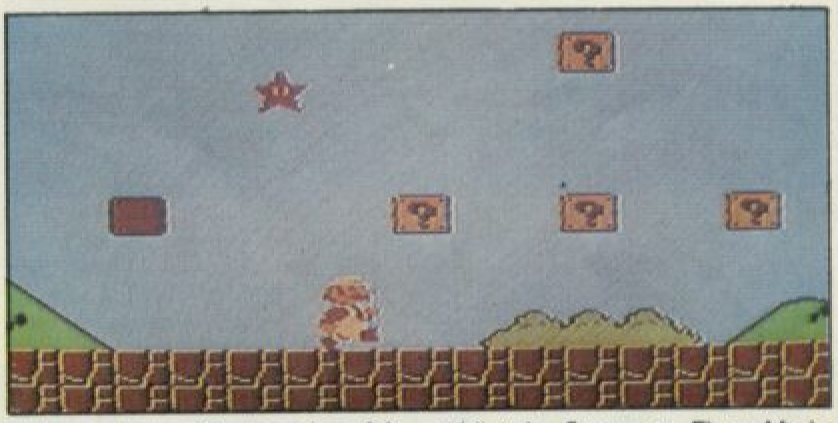
MAKING TURTLE SOUP

SUPER MARIO BROS.

Nintendo

Cartridge: £19.99

Mario Bros. proved a great and playable game. A follow up was a certainty. *Super Mario Bros.*, it has to be said, has an even sillier plot: La principessa dei funghi è prigioniera della malvagia tribù delle tartarughe Koopa. Well, that's the Italian version, thanks to Nintendo's odd, but thoughtful, dual-language packaging, and very cultural too. Now in English . . .



Not content with rescuing fair damsels from giant apes, Mario and Luigi have been hired to defeat the evil Koopa tribe of turtles, who have imprisoned the people of the Mushroom Kingdom using a powerful black magic spell. Princess Toadstool (the Mushroom King's daughter) is the only person capable of reversing this spell, but she is a prisoner too, so it's up to the Bros. to rescue her and destroy the invaders.

The Mushroom Kingdom is divided into several worlds of four areas each. A time limit is given to reach the flagpole of the castle in each area, where any remaining time on the clock is converted into bonus points (except on the last castle). Not such an easy task – the path is strewn with obstacles and patrolled by turncoat mushrooms (who now serve the Turtle King), and several types of turtle guards including green Koopa Troopas, red Koopa Troopas, red and green Koopa Paratroopas, and the delightfully named Hammer Brothers, who throw hammers at brave rescuers.

As in the previous game, some bricks sporting question marks contain coins which give extra lives, whilst mushrooms increase Mario's size and provide a power boost and fire flowers award with fireballs to throw at all and sundry; last, but not least, picking up a Starman gives limited invincibility, although touching any baddies whilst in Super or Fiery Mario mode returns him to his normal size.

Thus it is that after battling through the many hazards of the Mushroom Kingdom, Mario è Luigi finally come face to face with the evil wizard King Bowser, and following a titanic struggle defeats him, and like all good stories, everyone lives happily ever after – or no?

COMMENT

To play this game is to get hooked. Simple to understand, it is therefore easy to play; no ploughing through bedsheet-sized instruction leaflets with this one. Nintendo's small-sized controller takes some getting used to, but perseverance reaps its own reward, because the graphics and sound are splendid, combining to make a game that is colourful, jolly and in places pleasantly frustrating as you try to work out the best route round a problem. Let us hope that Super Mario Bros. makes it onto home micros in better shape than did its predecessor.

OVERALL 89%

PRESS ANY KEY

GOING FOR THE THROAT

VAMPIRE KILLER
Konami

MSX CARTRIDGE ONLY

As the full moon slides majestically behind an angry black cloud and the sound of lurking night creatures plays teasingly on his mind, Simon approaches the castle. As he creeps ever nearer, the huge iron gateway swings open as if guided by a phantom hand, and Simon stealthily enters the grounds. Armed with only a whip, he proceeds to the main entrance, knowing that to free his home town of Dransylvania from the evil which invades it, the cause itself must be destroyed – Count Dracula.

The Dracula theme has always been a popular, if over-exposed nightmare, and generally works fine as long as there is atmosphere. Here, the music and sound effects, which adorn the action throughout, do help. Despite the vampire link being tenuous, the game itself proves to be quite good.

The opening sequence of *Vampire Killer* shows the first of three available Simons entering the castle grounds, from this point on the player takes control. Using either joystick or keyboard Simon can be made to walk left, right, upstairs, downstairs, jump and, with the fire button or space bar, deploy any weapon he may be carrying with him. These vary from the practical whip to a battleaxe and even arcane weapons such as a silver cross or holy water for the disposing of those particularly powerful foes.

Weapons are hidden behind walls, in candle holders and may even appear when an enemy has been defeated. The castle's evil denizens are many and varied, attacking in droves throughout the twelve game levels. Help of one sort or another is available although sometimes it may be well hidden. Keys to treasure chests can be picked up, and when the appropriate container is discovered its contents are Simon's to plunder. Some objects can increase or decrease Simon's intelligence, locate weak walls and even show the player a layout of the level he is currently battling his way through. Should Simon succeed in reaching the very top



When you get here, you're at the final screen and staring at deadly Dracula himself (the revamped version) – MSX screen

of the castle and destroy Dracula then the invisible force behind the all the evil foes he has previously faced will reveal itself and challenge him to the death.

MSX

Cartridge: £18.95

The graphics surrounding the main characters are well presented and help to instill a little of the feeling of being in a satanic castle. Control is easy and when Simon whips out his weapon, it's look out ghoulies. *Vampire Killer* **provides plenty to do although it can get a little repetitive, the nice graphics and sound coupled with easy gameplay help to make it an above average product . . . something to get your teeth into.**

OVERALL 69%

"Despite the vampire link being tenuous, the game itself proves to be quite good."

VERSION UPDATE

Camping out

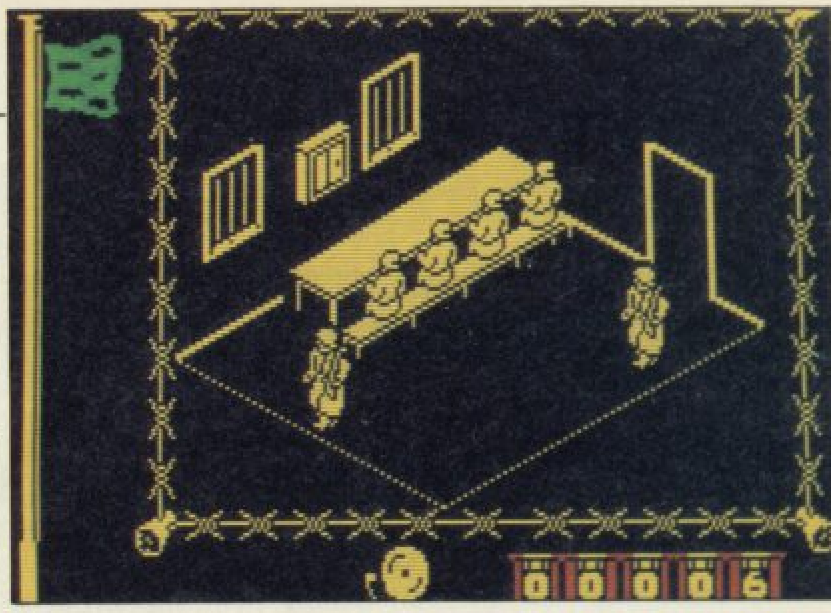
THE GREAT ESCAPE
Ocean

IBM PC £19.95

THE HIGHLY successful Spectrum game from Denton Designs arrives on the PC after almost a year. Incidentally, Denton Designs have been at work for some time on another 3-D game with a massive playing area which uses similar, although more open, graphics to those of *The Great Escape*. Designed with the Spectrum 128 in mind, THE GAMES MACHINE can now reveal *Tibet*, as it was codenamed, will be released soon as *Where Time Stood Still* – and it will be available in a PC format.

But back to the IBM PC and Germany in 1942: set in a WWII German POW castle prison, the player's task in this arcade-adventure is to escape. The castle, which is described in isometric forced perspective 3-D using individual screens for rooms and a scrolling section for the camp perimeter, has to be explored, a daily routine established and items, which will assist in the final break for freedom, collected and stored in a hidey-hole.

Secret tunnels can be used to move around the castle, whilst avoiding the camp commandant, his guards and their dogs. It's quite an undertaking, with the bribing of fellow prisoners to create diversions, drugging guards dogs and cutting barbed wire, being only some of the tasks necessary to effect the getaway.



WWII escape thrills on the PC

COMMENT

This is a fine conversion from the Spectrum original, which was a CRASH Smash (December 1986). It retains all the original's atmosphere through the detail of camp life and the aerial viewpoint which works well. With lots to do, and a large castle to search, it's highly playable and provides quite a challenge. Interest pales, though, once completed as it is very much a get-through-it-once game. A pity, too, that the IBM version hasn't taken the greater advantages offered by the machine over the Spectrum, because it's not much of an improvement (if any) over the original.

IBM PC
OVERALL 60%

PRESS ANY KEY

BEWARE THE IDES OF ZARCH

ZARCH
Superior Software

ARCHIMEDES ONLY

The first British computer game to get to Number One in the States was *Elite*, the space trading program which made *Lords Of Midnight* look easy. Its co–author, the now affluent **David Braben**, wrote it originally for the BBC (it was later taken up by **Firebird** and converted for all the popular 8-bit machines), so it seems logical that **Superior Software** should tempt him to put aside his intention of getting a PhD and design for them a game to beat all games. A PhD has its attractions, no doubt, but to clinch the deal, Superior had the new Acorn 32-bit RISC computer **Archimedes**, adopted as the new generation BBC machine, in mind for David, and theirs was to be the first ever game for it. Enter *Zarch*.



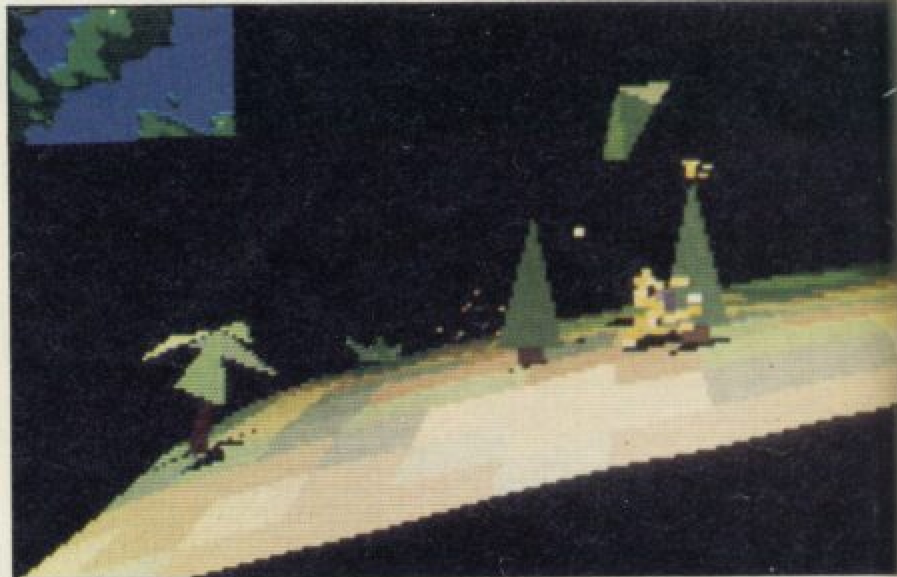
Zarch is actually a hoverplane which can flit over land and sea, or power into space at the touch of a thruster. Its main task in life is to defend the lovely countryside against nefarious alien spacecraft – though its powerful weapons, in the hands of inept, or plainly malicious, pilots, is as easily capable of scoring own-goals and defoliating the landscape.

A lot can be said about this landscape too, but obviously much of the breath-taking speed with which the highly detailed, shaded graphics move, is owed to the amazing Archimedes computer (even more so when you consider that *Zarch* is written in BASIC!). If you don't own one (and who does yet?), then drooling is the only proper response. So this review is for the converted elite, or for the masochists among us who like to see what we might be playing if only we had the large quantities of loot necessary.

RED PERIL

But back to the game: the race of outer space ogres against which Zarch is pitted is intent upon polluting the landscape by spraying over everything a red virus intended to contaminate all forms of life.

The first step is to locate the enemy as soon as you have lifted off the ground at home base. There's a scanner at the top left of screen which shows an orbital view of the planet's islands and seas; the positions of Zarch (white) and the home base (grey) are shown, and all other colours of dots are the enemy. These are made up of six types: Seeders, Bombers, Drones, Mutants, Pests and Fighters, of which the first two actually spread the virus. Attacks come in waves, and once one threat has been disposed of another quickly follows, faster and stronger.



Frozen by the photograph, Zarch's graphics cease looking so spectacular – nothing but hands-on can convey their elegance and sheer speed

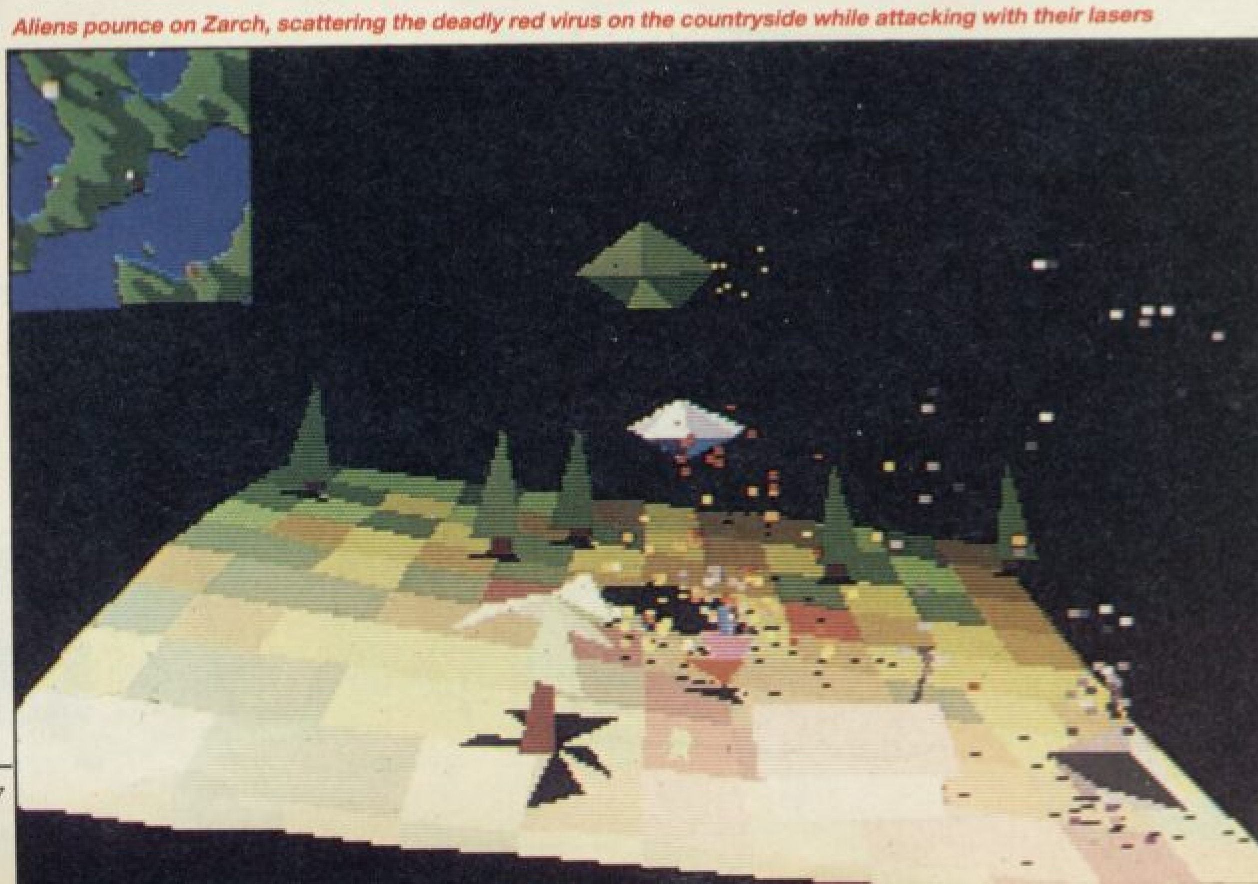
You have three weapons at your command activated by the three mouse buttons, a rapid-fire laser cannon, homing missiles and a limited number of smart bombs which destroy everything in the vicinity (landscape features included if you are low enough). Each successful attack on an enemy craft increases your score, and with every five thousand points a smart bomb and an extra life is awarded.

MOUSABATICS

Control is via the mouse, and, until you achieve a reasonable level of finesse, a very slippery little beast it is too – the first confrontation with an alien tends to be somewhat uncontrolled (flying upside down in ever-increasing circles letting off laser beams and missiles willy-nilly). Thoughtfully, orientation of the mouse relative to the table top is done for you at the start of each mission, ie with the hand control in a central position relative to the Hoverplane. The distance of the mouse from this position determines the declination of the craft and the angle at which it is moved defines the compass direction. Thus, once in the air you are set free to perform some of the most amazingly elegant aerobatics a humble home computer gamesplayer could wish for in the truly three-dimensional screen world.

Relevant information is displayed across the top of the

Aliens pounce on Zarch, scattering the deadly red virus on the countryside while attacking with their lasers



screen, including the player's score, number of homing missiles on board, lives remaining, number of smart bombs, the current wave attack and the high score. Directly below this are two bars, orange showing fuel level and green indicating height. When you leave the planet's atmosphere, the thrust cuts out, remaining dormant until Zarch drops sufficiently to be back within the envelope of air.

There appears to be no ultimate goal to *Zarch*, except to fight off waves of extrinsic creatures until the odds become impossible and defeat inevitable. That, and delighting to the extraordinary sense of aerial freedom the game gives.

ARCHIMEDES
Diskette: £19.95

Zarch **is incredibly fast. The** Elite **style craft zooms over highly detailed landscapes, which feature real terrain effects such as hills and valleys, and whose ground objects expand and reduce in real 3-D at a fair wack. The sound is disappointing though, only minimal spot effects throughout, but even with the enormous memory available, it's likely that the complexities of the program running in BASIC made it difficult to squeeze anything else in. Expect to see and hear amazing things once programmers get to grips with compression and machine code!** Zarch **is a fascinating game to play because of its great attention to detail (blast a tree and watch it smoulder). The big BUT is the price of the Archimedes and its present lack of software support – who can afford it?**

OVERALL 81%

OTHER FORMATS
It would be foolish to predict that Zarch **will never appear on any other existing machine – not so long ago the pundits proclaimed that BBC** Elite **couldn't fit on a Spectrum or a Commodore 64, yet it did, very well. When pushed, Superior Software were prepared to suggest that they might make a conversion for the Amiga – sometime . . .**

" . . . in the air you are free to perform the most elegant aerobatics a gamesplayer could wish for in the truly three-dimensional screen world."

FOREVER DIGGING RUBBLE

SKULL-DIGGERY
Nexus

The programmer/founders of Nexus, Paul Voysey and Tayo Olowu, first hit the headlines with a Spectrum game called *Psytron* as well as several others for Beyond on both the Spectrum and Commodore 64. Later they drew several senior management figures from Beyond after the innovative software house was sold to British Telecom. Since its inception, Nexus has had an uneven history of 8-bit releases. *Skull-Diggery* is their first Atari ST game, written by the Unsung Heroes and released under licence.

A cave-mite's only true goal in life is to devour as many diamonds as it can. This sparkling vocation takes place in numerous varied screens, the overall objective being to collect the required number of gems within an allotted time and gain passage to the next stage.

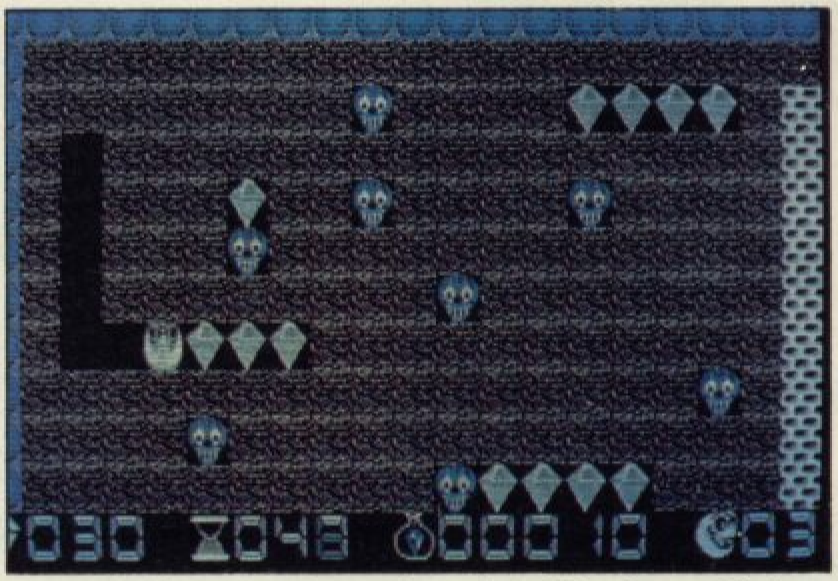
The little mite munches and digs its way through the caverns, gobbling up diamonds when they are encountered, and generally avoiding other inhabitants such as the crystal bats and crazy ghosts. However, careful utilisation of its fellow troglodytes is often a necessity if certain obstacles are to be overcome, they have a tendancy to explode on contact with other objects and can prove very useful for blasting through particularly tough barriers. But releasing them from their earthy prisons is a dangerous matter, since they rapidly home in on the nearest object – and that could well be you if you aren't fast enough to get out of reach.

A FLAT-EARTHER

Another cave dweller is the creeping vine which is invisible to all but the mite (useful for causing those necessary explosions). It rapidly engulfs the whole cavern if left to its own organic devices – although if you succeed in enclosing it, something very interesting happens!

Skulls are everywhere and, as with the diamonds, don't get caught underneath them for there is little that can be achieved with a flat mite. However they can be used to advantage in many seemingly hopeless situations, while munching one of the rarely found cup cakes provides an extra life (extra lives are also awarded after every five thousand points).

Game options include music or sound effects, one- or two-player game, joystick or keyboard control and also the choice of which screen number to start on. When actually playing *Skull–diggery* in two-player mode you can either compete on screen simultaneously (each mite in its own field) against the clock, or combine forces, in which case, at suitable moments, one of the players may be sacrificed for the team's general good.



Remarkably bland colours in a worm's-eye view of life underground in the Skull-Diggery gem factory – Atari ST screen

MIGHTY MATEY MITEY

Skull-diggery is easy enough to get into, since it follows a well-worn pattern of gameplay, although the first shock comes with the bland pastel shades used rather than from any exciting action. The cave–mite looks around with those mitey big eyes of his as he smoothly digs and munches the surrounding rock in search of gems through 100 screens, which should be enough for most people. The search requires some careful thinking although speed and dexterity are also necessary from time to time. The music is annoying but can thankfully be turned off, and the option to start on different levels prevents a lack of playing skill from making the game instantly tedious.

ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.95

Taking into consideration the very basic idea of the game, which owes an awful lot to the seminal *Boulderdash*, everything seems to work well enough, for this is a game where graphics, and these are quite chunky, take second place to the inevitable how-to-go-about-it strategy required to succeed. Skull–diggery **is a little archaic and certainly does not use the Atari ST to its full potential. Throughout the game the programmers have used remarkably bland colours. A quick fiddle with the monitor controls assured us that this is how the game is supposed to look – perhaps it should be put down to being a palette-subtle approach from Nexus. However it's playable and quite cute in the butchest sense of the word.**

OVERALL 64%

OTHER FORMATS
Nexus have no plans to release any other machine versions. In truth, the concept has been more than adequately covered through the Boulderdash **games and their clones on all the 8-bit formats, and we wonder whether Amiga owners would entirely welcome this aged idea. Certainly if there were to be any plans for 8-bit versions, there would have to be some very novel approach used to give it life.**

" . . . careful thinking, speed and dexterity are necessary from time to time."

PRESS ANY KEY

VERSION UPDATE

Droiding

RED L.E.D.
Ariolasoft/Starlight



Amstrad Cass: £9.99, Disk: £14.99 Spectrum Cass: £&.99

We have already reviewed the Commodore 64 *Red L.E.D.* in THE GAMES MACHINE to some critical acclaim (see Issue One, page 61 for full game review). Now this surreal *Marble Madness* look-alike has been let loose on the Spectrum and Amstrad. The game's objective is to control three droids around 37 three-dimensional levels in a bid to link up a cosmic grid, and there are no significant playing differences between the versions.

COMMENT

On the Spectrum, Starlight have opted for a much smaller playing area, with loads of decorative detail round the edges – it 'feels' even smaller than the on Amstrad. This restriction has had little effect on the scrolling though, and it is much jerkier than one would expect (and considering the monochrome playing graphics). All in all, despite the game's inherent playing and addictive qualities, the slowness is a severe detraction.

SPECTRUM 48/128
OVERALL 64%

COMMENT

The Amstrad *Red L.E.D.* uses colour excellently, better than the 64 version in fact, the sprites in particular are nicely detailed. The scrolling suffers slightly more – a bit jerky – but only a minor problem and one which doesn't affect game play. It runs slower too, which means it might take a while to get into the game, but with dozens of mazes and the varied attributes of each droid, it needs a good dose of strategic thought to play well and provides plenty of challenge.

AMSTRAD
OVERALL 79%

HANG TEN

720°

US Gold

Skate or die! The cry now rings out on the home micros courtesy of US Gold with their latest licensed offering from Atari – *720°*, a sensational skateboarding experience. 720°, just in case you are wondering, is the skateboarding term for spinning round twice on the board whilst in mid jump. Converted for the Spectrum by **Tiertex Software**, *720°* is a far better conversion than *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom* (reviewed in this issue), which they also did. On the Commodore 64 it's up to erstwhile **Chris Butler**, and judging by the preview copy we had, it's looking good.

720° takes you into the heart of Skate City, performing stunts to build up your street cred by collecting medals and cash in one (even if you do go to the arcades) of the most original games to emerge this year.

A better cash level allows you to buy better equipment such as boards, shoes and pads from the city shops and improve your performance. There's two levels of skating to choose from – trainee and advanced; the difference being that advanced level includes further hazards which generally make life more difficult.

Within the Skate City boundary four parks are to be found, each presenting different and challenging skateboarding tasks; take a look at the Park Patrol panel for the details. Each park can only be visited once per level. Finding them can be a problem, but to ensure novice skaters don't get lost there are map icons placed at intervals along the streets and



A most original game – clamber on your skateboard and have a good time – Spectrum screen

along with a kick key; in addition there is also a jump and stop function.

Naturally, you aren't the only one in Skate City, there are plenty of cars, bikers and bodybuilders (narcissists of a feather flock together?) who line the streets – colliding with any moving thing, though it won't actually kill you, knocks you off the skateboard.

Perhaps *720°*'s only failing is that the parks could have become progressively harder. However, fans of the arcade original and novices alike should love this playable and addictive game.

skating over them reveals a map of the city. And to further make sure you don't get lost, there are pointers on the roads. Tickets are required to enter the parks, fortunately two are provided at the start. Extra tickets are awarded when you first break 5,000 points, and then one for every additional 10,000.

manoeuvring around the city and parks should become second nature. The skateboard is turned clockwise or anticlockwise and to get moving you propell yourself

PARK PATROL

DOWNHILL
On the slippery slope already – and you can bet your bottom dollar it's slippery, because there's water either side of you. Falling off the edge of the track ends in a resounding splash and time being knocked off your clock. Keep kicking all the time, add a few jumps and 720°s and you could easily wind up with a silver medal first time around.

RAMP
Rampaging ramps of the 720° circuit brings you the half-pipe as seen in *California Games*. Quite simple really, just slide from one end to the other, you don't even have to turn – the computer does that for you which gives you plenty of time to do some fancy stuff to build up those points.

JUMP
Another slippery slope with water on either side. The jump track is basically the same as the downhill course but with the addition of vertical drops which must be jumped. It is more difficult to obtain the higher medals, although getting a bronze after a few goes is good going.

SLALOM
This one's for the real clever clogs – a combination of the downhill course with slalom flags to weave in and out of. When you've cracked this one you're in with a chance of being the best skater in town!



One of the 'parks' from 720°. Your character's just performing a 'half-pipe', up at the top of the slope – Spectrum screen

NARCISSISTIC

Skate City itself is pretty big and there is plenty to do before you enter a park – but don't hang around for too long as killer bees have an unnerving tendency to attack lazy skaters, which costs you a credit.

The art of skating needs some practice, but after a while

SPECTRUM
Cassette: £8.99

720° **is probably one of the best conversions US Gold have proffered for a long while. The scrolling works extremely well, neatly and suitably moving in time with the skater's kicks. The monochrome graphics with the addition of some subtle shading give a good feeling of perspective and solidity. Sadly, there's little sound which is unnerving when you can see the loudspeakers at the start point booming away.**

OVERALL 83%

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £11.99
November

As you can see from the Commodore preview copy screen shot of 720°**, the graphics are large and as colourful as the arcade original, and we may well expect it to be an even better rendition than the already excellent Spectrum version.**

AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £11.99 disk
late November

We haven't seen anything of it yet, but if the programming team make the best use of the Amstrad's capabilities, then there's no reason why it should not be a marvellous conversion.



" . . . fans of the arcade original and novices alike should love this playable and addictive game – one of the most original to emerge this year."

THE RIGHT STUFF

CHUCK YEAGER'S ADVANCED FLIGHT SIMULATOR

Electronic Arts

The recent influx of American software companies to Britain has had a decided effect in the area of 'serious' entertainment. Americans have always believed the British to be starved of intelligent games, and in putting matters right, have asked us to delve into labyrinthine adventures and complicated flight simulations. **Chuck Yeager** is one of America's all time aviation heroes. Flying the experimental plane X-1, he was the world's first person to exceed Mach One (breaking the 'sound barrier') and is renowned as a superior test pilot of many of today's modern combat aircraft. **Electronic Arts** have now produced a flight simulator endorsed by the man himself.

In the Advanced Flight Simulator, you can become a test pilot and fly any of 14 famous historic planes from a 1917 Sopwith Camel to a present day F-18 Hornet. A runway is thoughtfully provided and various landmarks can be visited. Once the sight-seeing palls, a series of racing courses are also available to fly round using any of the aeroplanes.

On screen you see the cockpit and standard instrumentation (this does not change significantly from craft to craft, which is a bit of a cheat, especially as Sopwith Camels were not noted for their sophisticated 'head-up' displays, but each aeroplane flies very much according to its specification and performance). Various flight influencing factors can be set up including wind speed and direction.

The view of the outside world can also be altered through an 'Eye' menu to observe the plane from all angles, including rear views or even from a separate chase plane. The various options selectable from the main menu are Test Flight, Formation Flying, Airplane Racing, a Demonstration flight and Flight Instruction.

IN THE AIR

Test Flight simply means taking to the skies in a chosen aircraft and flying the plane to its limits. **Formation Flying** involves closely following a lead plane through a series of stunts and aerobatic manoeuvres, including flying under gates and around buildings, as well as performing rolls, stalls and loops. In **Airplane Racing**, you take part in a race against up to five computer-controlled planes through a series of gates and slalom hazards.

The **Demonstration Flight** takes the test pilot through all the standard aerobatic moves possible via the XPG-12 experimental jet. And finally, **Flight Instruction** is a series of flying lessons in which you can either be the pilot of a Cessna 172 or be an observer, in which case Yeager flies the plane for you. Nice of him.

COMBAT SIMULATOR

To complement the Advanced Flight Simulator program, an Air Combat Simulator will be released later, enabling the player to go head-to-head against Yeager himself in simulated dogfights. *Top Gun* watch out!

THE AIRCRAFT

- **Cessna 172 Skyhawk**
- **F-16 Fighting Falcon**
- **F-18 Hornet**
- **P-51 Mustang**
- **Piper Cherokee**
- **Sopwith Camel**
- **Spad XIII**
- **SR-71**
- **Spitfire**
- **X-1**
- **X-3 Stiletto**

(and then there are three 'experimental' planes . . .)

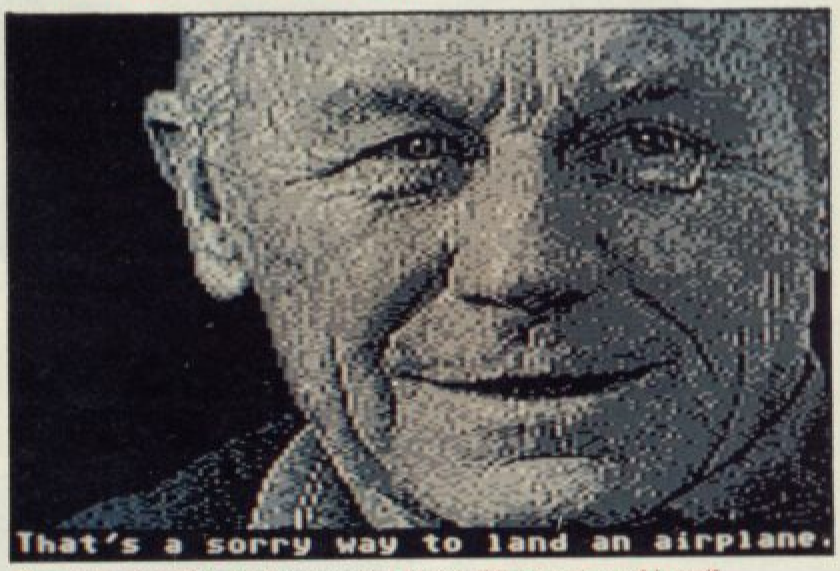
- **XNL-16 Instigator**
- **XPG-12 Samurai**
- **XRH-4 MadDog**

The cockpit view – Chuck Yeager on the PC





Flying around the landscape can be a touch slow on the Commodore 64, but the sensation is realistic enough



The warm, rounded, mildly reproving tones of the great man himself. A nicely digitised picture from the Commodore 64

PC

Diskette: £24.95

Comparisons with Flight Simulator 2 **are inevitable:** Chuck Yeager **AFS shares the same sort of in-depth and comprehensive flying techniques which made the Sublogic program such a classic. Where** AFS **succeeds though is in the sheer number of options available for test flying the numerous planes – and 14 different planes are more than enough for anyone. Racing around the courses against computer opponents is both exhilarating and challenging, and simply exploring the world is enjoyable in itself. Even with solid graphics, the program moves along at quite a rate.**

OVERALL 89%

COMMODORE 64

Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

The Commodore AFS **has most, if not all, the features of the PC version, the major difference being the speed. Flying around can take a while, as the solid graphics (rather more colourful than on the PC) move in a series of large and slightly jerky jumps in animation, with the screen update proving slower than the speed of the aircraft at times. The actual game works well though, and the formation flying and airplane racing are particularly good, and if you can accept the speed with which everything runs, then** Chuck Yeager AFS**is worth a place in any flight simulation collection.**

OVERALL 78%

"Racing around the courses against computer opponents is both exhilarating and challenging . . . "

VERSION UPDATE

Ice-crisp sword clash

BARBARIAN
THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR
Palace
Atari ST £14.99

DRAX, the dirty old sorcerer, has the hots for Princess Mariana and threatens that something really nasty will happen to her people if she doesn't make him happy. However, he's a typical manic mystic and agrees to an idea which will hopefully prolong the people's suffering. Should they find a champion able to defeat his demonic guardians then the Princess shall be freed. Suffice to say Drax's deadly minions make mincemeat of most 'heroes' until, from the forgotten wastelands of the North, comes an unknown barbarian whose strength and swordsmanship may yet win the day for Mariana. *Barbarian* can be played as a one- or two-player game – the solo fighter battles his way through ten of Drax's warriors before meeting the sorcerer himself, and the duo option allows friends to fight each other through rounds of 90 seconds until one emerges the victor.

Joystick or keyboard may be used and each player can take up to twelve blows (or one decapitation!) before falling defeated to the ground. Sixteen different movements are available in order to win, include jumping, neck chops, crouching, head butt and kicks. Music or sound effects may be selected, and a demo mode is available should your ego need deflating.

Barbarian is already available for the Commodore 64 and Amstrad CPC (**disk £12.99, cass £9.99**) and Spectrum 48K, +2 compatible (**cass £9.99**).

Another victory for Barbarian as the jolly little green thing plays football – Atari ST



COMMENT

Ah, the cut and thrust of the warrior world. The succulent sound of skin giving way beneath metal-edged blows, mingling tantalisingly with the ice-crisp clash of sword on sword. The thud of your victim's head as it bounces on the hard ground, and the pleasing laugh of the . . . er, green creature when it drags off yet another body to devour at its leisure. What more could a gamesplayer ask for? Seriously though, Barbarian **on the ST is great. The sound enhances the game no end and the backdrops and side–snakes are very polished. The characters themselves could, perhaps, have been improved upon as they appear very similar to the Commodore 64 version, however this by no means detracts from the game play, and Palace will do well with this very competent conversion.**

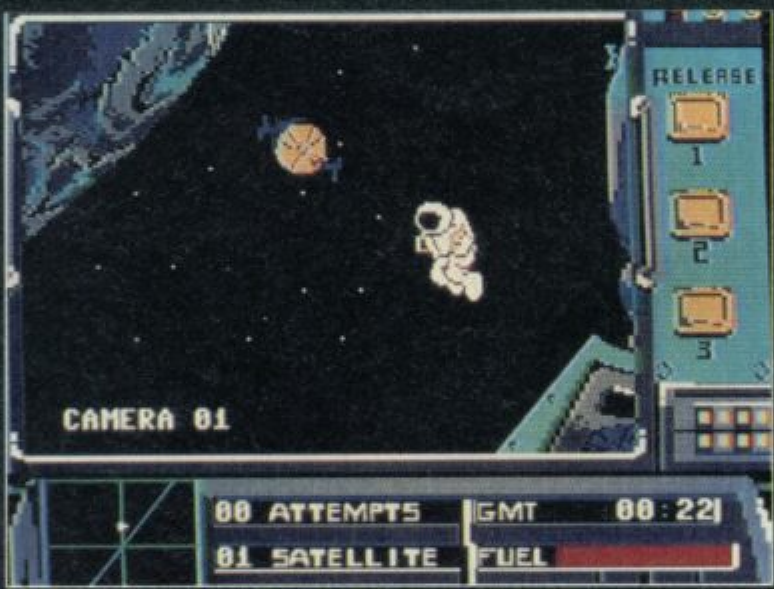
ATARI ST
OVERALL 87%

Unlike the 8-bit versions, the Atari ST enjoys some stunningly varied backgrounds to the violent action

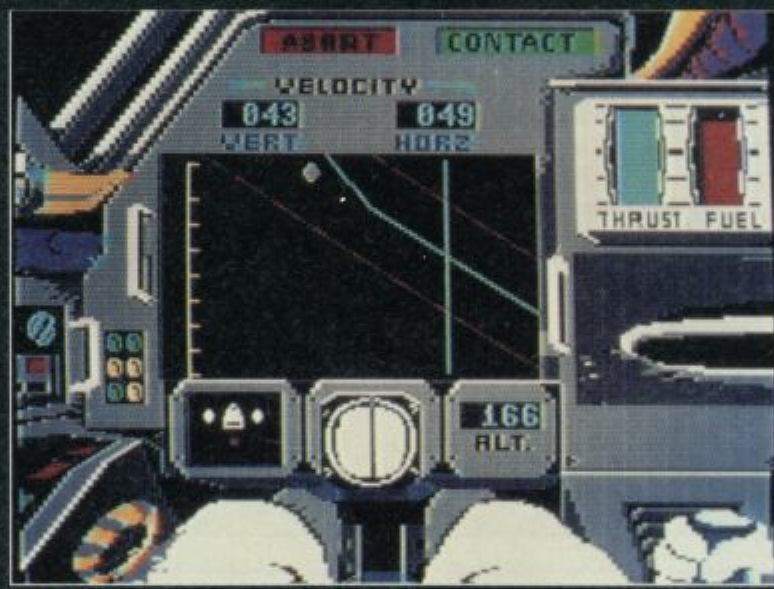


APOLLO 18
TEST DRI

FIRST...... TRY TO DECIDE WHETHER APOLLO 18 IS BETTER T
BET YOU CAN'T. THEY BOTH HAVE GREAT ACTION A



SPACEWALK TO A CRIPPLED SURVEILLANCE SATELLITE. ZERO GRAVITY AND ZERO MARGIN FOR ERROR!



ARE THEY CRATERS OR BOULDERS BELOW? YOU NEED TO BE COOL TO TAKE MANUAL CONTROL OF THE APOLLO LANDER DURING DESCENT.



THE DETAILED SPEC CHART FOR THE LAMBORGHINI COUNTACH. 173 MPH AND 0-60 IN JUST 5.2 SECONDS!



DRIVE SET ROUTES WITHIN GIVEN TIME LIMITS. LOOK OUT FOR SLOW TRUCKS, OTHER TRAFFIC, MEN AT WORK AND BE CAREFUL TO USE YOUR RADAR DETECTOR TO LOCATE SPEED TRAPS.

THEN...... GO OUT AND BUY THEM BOTH. BET YOU WILL.
BECAUSE THEY'RE THE BEST AROUND.

★VS★

VE

R THAN TEST DRIVE.
N AND FANTASTIC SCREENS.

APOLLO 18



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SORRY I SPOOK

BUBBLE GHOST
Infogrames

Are Informatique, those Parisiens who are now famous for *Get Dexter*, do seem to be busy Frenchmen lately. Licensed by **Infogrames** in the UK, they have a whole host (no pun intended) of games forthcoming including *Phoenix* and *Bubble Ghost* (release dates early November). The packaging on the version which hopped through our letterbox will hopefully be enhanced slightly when it hits the streets. Apparently the translation from French to Anglais is a little too exact and the reason as to why the ghost must blow his soul around got lost somewhere.

Picture a derelict old castle filled with surrealist hi-tech equipment, quiet and still except for the pulsing and throbbing of the machines and the presence of a restless spirit. The ghostly wanderer is destined to travel the thousands of rooms within this melancholy mansion and at the same time protect his bubble–esque soul from the many traps therein. The ghost itself is intangible and may float through anything in its path, the soul however, is incredibly fragile and must be blown very gently from place to place and not be allowed to touch anything lest it burst.

GHOSTLY NAVIGATION

The screen layout displays the many castle rooms as bordering grey stone blocks filled increasingly with techno-traps which are, of course, situated in the most inconvenient of places. Some of the more dangerous traps may be disarmed by the means of finding the correct object to blow into its maw, thus opening a safer route for the soul-bubble.

Once the delicate bubble has been safely navigated through a room, the ghost turns to the player with a look of smug, innocent glee before the next screen scrolls vertically down and play continues. Should the ghost blow it, so to speak, and burst the bubble on a sharp spike, he gives the player a shake of his see–through fist and the hall has to be retackled.

The ghost's waftings require the use of both mouse and keyboard, controlling left, right and turning movements and blow. The bottom of the screen displays the hi–score, the present score, bubbles remaining, which hall is currently being negotiated and a bonus bar which decreases as time ticks by. The six highest scores are automatically saved to disk and displayed.

Atmospheric spot effects accompany the spooky negotiating feats, all part of the attention to detail – which is what stands out in *Bubble Ghost*. Every trap, object and backdrop is very nicely implemented. Some of the halls within the castle are really tough to negotiate with dexterity not being the only resource required, a little logical thought is also necessary to get through some of them successfully.

Anyone who fancies a quick blow and can get into the spirit of this game will have great fun exploring the castle and defending their immortal soul.



That's your immortal soul at the top right, but you can't do anything with it until the candle's blown out. Bubble Ghost is usually white unless, like here, he blows himself red in the face – and upside down . . . Atari ST screen

ATARI ST
Disk: £19.95

Cute. Spooking around a non too-ancient castle in the guise of a ghost, blowing bubbles left right and centre seems the recipe for a good time. With its smooth and realistic animation – the bubble is especially impressive – Bubble Ghost **is enjoyable, often amusing and always entertaining. The urge to see all 1,000 halls does seem to fade after a while as each conquered screen is replaced by yet another test, and trying not to complete too much in one sitting is more likely to keep interest fired. If you are tired of blasting aliens to bits or slicing parts off muscley opponents then** Bubble Ghost **could be just the rest and relaxation in eternity you're looking for.**

OVERALL 72%

OTHER FORMATS

While there's no technical reason that Bubble Ghost **shouldn't appear on 8-bit, Infogrames are well placed to know that plenty of games of a similar ilk have already done so, and the delicate quality of the ST version graphics is hardly going to look as impressive on, say, the Spectrum. In consequence, only expect a PC version some time in the New Year.**

"With its smooth and realistic animation Bubble Ghost **is enjoyable, often amusing and always entertaining."**

VERSION UPDATE

Unmasked

MASK
Gremlin Graphics
Commodore 64

Cass: £9.99, Disk: £14.99

Reviewed in Issue One of THE GAMES MACHINE (pages 63 and 64), the Commodore 64 version *MASK* – licensed from the **Kenner Parker Toys** characters – now joins its Spectrum and Amstrad counterparts.



MASK, the Commodore 64 version's graphics seem more confusing than on either Spectrum or Amstrad

COMMENT

The graphics aren't as detailed as the Amstrad version, as can be seen from the screen shot, but they look good and work well in movement. The scrolling in particular is very smooth. The other 8-bit versions of *MASK* were very playable and the 64 adaption is no exception. Not, perhaps, an earth-shattering release, but for arcade-adventurers it is well worth considering, and MASK fans should buy immediately.

COMMODORE 64
OVERALL 70%

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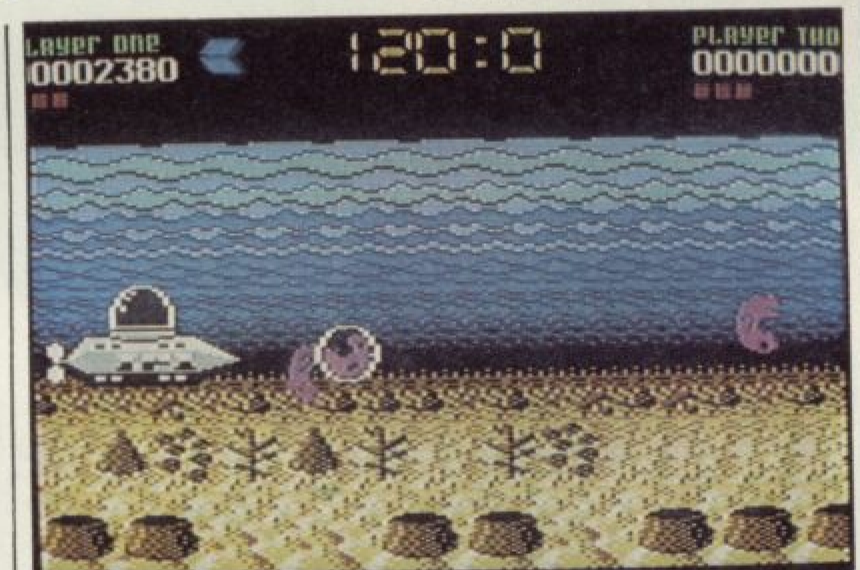
Despite **Hewson** losing the major **Graftgold** service of Andrew Braybrook and Steve Turner, who have signed up with Telecomsoft-Firebird, Hewson are still well stocked with some excellent programmers such as **Raffaele Cecco** (*Exolon*), **Mark Kelly** who is currently working on *Marauder* and **John Phillips**, responsible for *Impossaball* and now this, his latest top-notch offering *Nebulus*.



Pogo a-go-go on his way up the twirling tower: original and compelling – Nebulus on the Commodore 64

The planet Nebulus is having problems – with the Nebulus Planning Permission Committee (NPPC) having taken off several millenia for a holiday, buildings have sprung up like nobody's business. Worst of all are the aliens who, having tired of intergalactic marauding, have settled down as illegal immigrants and built eight towers in the middle of the ocean.

The people of Nebulus want them pulled down and call upon Pogo – a one-green-thing destruction force – to clamber to the top of each cylindrical tower by means of precarious ledges and then set off the destruction mechanisms at the top.



Catching fish in bubbles and picking them up constitutes the extra game in the Commodore 64 version

NOVEL SOLUTION

Phillips has opted for a novel solution to describe the towers in 3-D, and it works exceedingly well; Pogo stays centrally placed while the tower scrolls smoothly around him, and it is the revolving ledges at different heights that create a sense of depth. The illegal aliens, who come in many guises, have different set movement patterns, mostly revolving around the towers. Some, however, drift across the screen and, although not particularly vicious, knock Pogo from a ledge if he collides with one. The others don't kill either but, like drifters, knock Pogo from ledges, and if he does not land on a lower ledge, then he ends up in the drink and drowns.

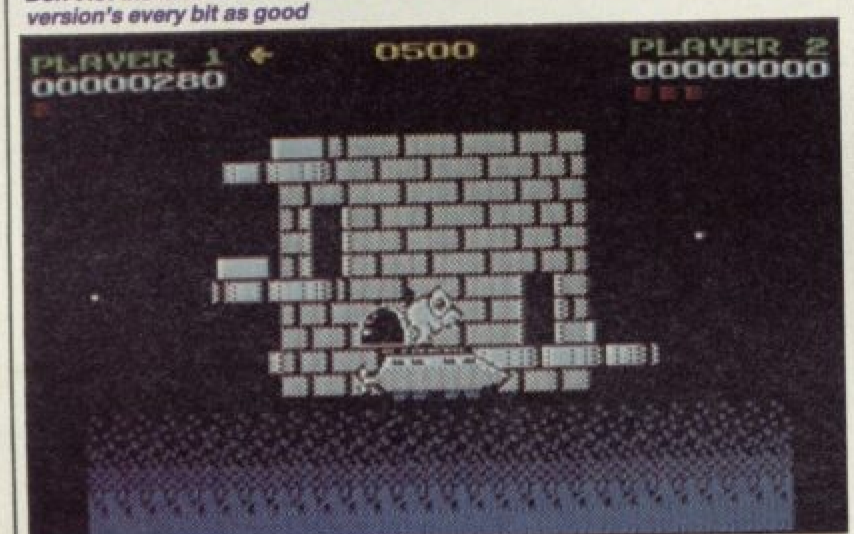
It is possible to hide from alien depradations in the tunnels, which periodically cut through the tower diameter leading from one side to the other – though their real use is for traversing the width of the tower to reach higher legdes.

As few aliens can actually be killed, *Nebulus* is more a game of timing and pattern learning – when to walk under, or jump over obstacles is important. Learning the law of the ledges is also vital; some disappear, some elevate to a higher position and some act as conveyer belts. Any lack of concentration, or memory leads to Pogo's downfall, literally.

Surprisingly for a Hewson game, the front-end presentation isn't very good leading to a rather weak first impression; although the title screen music is competent, there's no define keys option, or joystick selection on the Spectrum. The opening screen just provides the title and credits, with high-scores that pop up occasionally.

Playing *Nebulus* late at night, which is quite possible because of its addictiveness, with bleary eyes is not recommended as too many mistakes can lead to hideous frustration – especially when you've got eight towers jammed full of compelling gameplay and beautiful graphics.

Don't let the lacklustre colours of this screenshot put you off, the Spectrum version's every bit as good



COMMODORE BONUS

Available only on the Commodore is an intermission level between towers. This involves Pogo's underwater fishing trips in his submarine which transports him from tower to tower. As the seven-level parallax scrolling background flies past, fish spin towards you. With the aid of the sub's cannon, Pogo fires at them and traps them in a bubble so they can be collected. The amount of fish caught determines your bonus score – it's also quite a relaxing break before commencing the next vertiginous feat of destruction.

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £7.95

The Spectrum graphics are monochromatic, although a bit more colour could have been splashed about on the ledges if they were exactly one character high; happily the mono graphics don't have any serious effect on the gameplay apart that it can be difficult sometimes to notice aliens as quickly. The title-screen music is surprisingly good (there's no difference between 48K and 128K) although there's little but spot FX throughout the game. Nebulus will have you coming back for more and more until you've eventually finished all eight towers. And once you've done that you'll play it again just to remind yourself how good it is.

OVERALL 87%

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £12.95

Nebulus is fiendish if not downright devilish. Essentially it's a simple idea turned into a highly playable, if occasionally, frustrating game. The graphics are well coloured and somewhat cutesy – especially Pogo, who's distinctly reminiscent of Gribbly. Climbing to the very top ledge only to be knocked right down to the bottom again may leave you feeling like you never want to play Nebulus ever again, but you can guarantee that in five minutes you will be back at the joystick because it's so addictive.

OVERALL 90%

OTHER FORMATS

Hewson have no plans for any other machines at present.

" . . . the towers in 3-D work exceedingly well . . . jammed full of compelling gameplay and beautiful graphics."

ROCK SANDWICH

3-D GALAX

Gremlin Graphics

As we stated in our preview in THE GAMES MACHINE Issue One, *3-D Galax* is **Gremlin**'s first game written specifically for the ST. It was programmed by **Paul Blythe** and represents a new angle on a well-tried theme, that of the early coin-op classic *Galaxians*. Instead of the usual vertical screen presentation, *3-D Galax* uses filled vector graphics for the alien ships, and you fly through them fo victory.

From the Vecton system they came. A massive starfleet of Vectoid spaceships heading for our system with one thing on their alien minds – destruction! As the fleet sweeps aside all in its path, a final, desperate plan is formed; if a test pilot can fly the brand new Astrablitz fighter craft to confront the enemy then maybe victory could just be snatched from the alien horde.

The enemy fleet is split into 99 attack waves, four different types of attack craft making up each wave, flying through space in one of 25 possible formations. The Vecton ships' formations are strictly structured and move towards the Astrablitz as solid three dimensional graphics. Only three pilot lives are given, and any collision loses one of them. As if this frenetic activity wasn't sufficient for your average Astrablitz pilot, the craft has the misfortune to run slap-bang into an asteroid storm after every fourth attack wave, and unless you want to be the filling in a rock sandwich, it's best to navigate through them.

The Astrablitz can be moved in all directions using a radar display to locate and intercept the Vecton fleet. This is located just below the pilot's viewscreen and shows a more traditional *Galaxians* view of the action, with the oncoming Vecton formations moving down the radar screen towards the Astrablitz stationed at the bottom.

Shooting the aliens earns up to 400 points. A choice of gunsights is available to help in destroying the system invaders, anti-craft missiles can be launched at the enemy attack waves, while anti-asteroid missiles help you avoid making an alien's breakfast of yourself all over the hurtling space rocks.

The central problem with *3-D Galax* lies in its lasting power, after all it is based on a rather old game, and while turning the action through 90° to provide a 3-D scenario brings new life to an old formula, the repetitive gameplay and the lack of graphical variation in the enemy ships mean it might not hold interest for long. However, Gremlin's plans for using the techniques developed with *3-D Galax* to do a 3-D space trading game – as reported in our last issue, and which Gremlin say is still 'a distinct possibility' – may, with the addition of stronger gameplay elements, provide us with something of far greater interest.



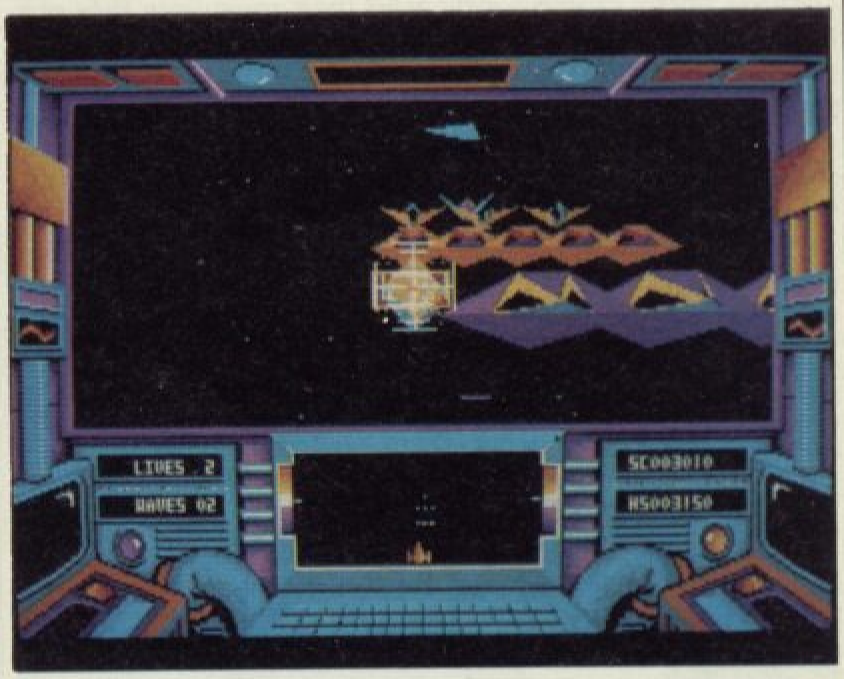
A Vectoid ship looms large – so does death . . . Atari ST screen

ATARI ST

Diskette: £19.99

The 3-D works very well, and if you can overcome the lack of visual and action variety, then this revamped and graphically better, version of Galaxians **can be a deal of fun – for a while. Playability is let down through the gunsights which fail in accuracy when it comes to lining up on the aliens, and also through inconsistent collision detection. The Atari sound effects are average, although the scream when ships collide is excellent.**

OVERALL 53%



Paul Blythe's game represents a new angle on a the well tested theme of Galaxians – Atari ST screen

OTHER FORMATS

In our report in Issue One on Gremlin's future plans, it had been left as a possibility that conversions of 3-D Galax **for the Amiga and Z80 machines might be undertaken. But on checking with the company, THE GAMES MACHINE was told that there are absolutely no plans to do so now.**

" . . . turning the action through 90° brings new life to an old formula, but it might not hold interest for long."

A SHOT IN THE DARK

BATTLESHIPS
Elite Systems

Several months back Elite created *Battleships* – the computer game – on the 8-bit machines. It was declared a hit by, and featured on the covers of, both *Computer & Video Games* and *Your Sinclair*. But in this fast moving business they were overtaken by events. CRASH and ZZAP! 64 indicated their reviewers thought highly of the implementation, but rather less of the game itself. Elite decided to hold back on a full-price release and *Battleships* will now be appearing on a future Elite compilation. Undeterred, however, Elite is now about to release an improved 16-bit *Battleships* for both the Atari ST and Amiga.

Based upon the traditional rainy day two-pads-and-pencils grid game, *Battleships* features the same map plotting with some animation thrown in for the firing sequence. The Amiga and ST versions are identical in gameplay, although on the Amiga it is a great deal noisier with speech and extra effects.

There are essentially two sections; first you place your ships on the grid and then plot where you think the enemy's are positioned. Second: the battle screen – there is no interaction but you can watch your opponent's ships being gratuitously destroyed when a direct hit is scored. The grid area is 20 x 20 squares and there are five ships per player (see panel).

Ships can then be placed upon the grid in any fashion – upside down, diagonally – but if you are playing against a human rather than the computer, you are each obliged to look away while the other plots positions. Once both sides are positioned, you can sit back, relax, and watch the fireworks, and with four shots per ship, that is usually satisfyingly visual.

Playing *Battleships* on your own against the computer can prove rather dull but with two players a little more excitement is added.



Battleships was never like this with pen and paper: the 'tween game action screen shows how accurate you were – Amiga screen



A more recognisable aspect – on the left the enemy complement, on the right the fighting grid – Atari ST screen

THOSE BATTLESHIPS IN FULL

AIRCRAFT CARRIER
The biggest ship on the seas – taking up a massive six squares – so you can hardly miss it! Probably the first one to be hit.

BATTLESHIP
Second in command of the fleet is the eponymous ship itself – five squares. Can be placed in any orientation, so even if you hit one square it may still take some time before you sink it.

SUBMARINE
The only time you find this submarine underwater is when it is sunk, which is achieved by four direct hits – three in a row and one off the side.

DESTROYER
The destroyer covers three squares and is therefore quite easy to hide by putting it in a corner diagonally.

MISSILE LAUNCH
The baby of the fleet, taking up a mere two squares. Usually the last one to be hit because it is so hard to find.

ATARI ST
Diskette: £14.99

Battleships **is polished with some very nice graphics, which give the game solidity, and coupled with sound, the game does come alive. However, it is still only Battleships – the same game you'd play with pencil and paper – and that's where it tends to fall apart. There's plenty of immediate appeal – and a kind of addictiveness is generated by the firing sequence, rather like in a good card game where you just can't wait to see what you have been dealt – but that is shortlived. Unless you're playing with a friend it is doubtful that you will return to it often on your own.**

OVERALL 65%

AMIGA
Diskette: £19.99
November

We have seen the finished game, and as it stands it is the same as on the ST. However, additional sound FX and speech are being added which may in turn add some rating points.

"..rainy day two-pads-and-pencils game with immediate appeal . . . but that is shortlived."

VERSION UPDATE

Wild Side Walk

RENEGADE
Imagine

Commodore 64/128
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £12.95



COMMENT

The graphics aren't as impressive or detailed as those of the Amstrad version, but they are smooth and feature some good animation. The keyboard is required for punching and kicking, which adds to the frustration of dying in the heat of the moment. A minor drawback for this otherwise excellent coin-op conversion.

COMMODORE 64/128
OVERALL 83%

WE REVIEWED Imagine's violent street-fighting *Renegade* in the last issue of THE GAMES MACHINE (page 54) in its Amstrad CPC and Spectrum formats.

FROM OUT OF THE ICE STORM

DARK SCEPTRE
Firebird

Dark Sceptre marks the long awaited and welcome return of **Mike Singleton** (*Lords Of Midnight*, *Doomdark's Revenge*) – on a less happy note, it also marks the death of **Beyond**, for the game was originally to be released under that label. So uncertainty about Beyond's future – it never really made its mark after being sold to Telecomsoft by EMAP – has now been resolved. Lately there has been a glut of arcade games but *Dark Sceptre* serves to redress the balance between them and the complex arcade-adventures that have been notably absent of late.

As with so many Mike Singleton games, there is a deal of background story, which is worth outlining, if only to give some indication of the atmosphere which the game engenders.

Peace reigned supreme in the Isles of the Western Sea. The Lord of the Isles ruled with a kindly hand and all was tranquil until the eve of a winter storm when in disarray ships of the Northlanders were thrown up onto the shores of the Western Islands. The Lord of the Isles smiled kindly upon the new arrivals and gave them succour.

When spring came and the ice storms quelled, the Lord of the Isles offered oaken ships to his guests so that they might return to their homelands. But the Northlanders coveted the richness of the Western Isles and refused the offer. Drawing their swords, they demanded lands of their own. Their might was too great even for the Lord's Sword Of Lightning to overthrow. Hiding his wrath, he granted them rich farmlands and bade them abide in peace within their new domain.

Fearing yet more treachery, the Lord ordered the finest smiths in the land to forge a Sceptre Of Power. It took five years to complete, during which time the Northlanders grew more demanding until nothing would satisfy them except the Lord of the Isle's very throne. Raising the Dark Sceptre above his head the Lord summoned the Dark Powers to defeat the Northlanders. Lightning leapt from the Sceptre and began consuming the Northlanders. But with the strength of the possessed their leader sprang upon the Lord and smote him with the Sceptre, then raised it high and called upon the Darkness to save them.

The winds died down and pain was quenched, yet at the same time their physical being seemed the lose substance and became shadowy. In return for its protecting them, the Northlanders owed allegiance to the evil power within the Dark Sceptre.

COMPLEX INTERACTION

The player is in command of a company of warriors seeking to destroy the Dark Sceptre and restore tranquility to the once-golden Western Isles. To hinder the player's movements the computer controls other companies of warriors. Most of these are indifferent to your cause at the start of the game although they can be persuaded to aid you in your task, but the Shadow Lords are your sworn enemies, whose sole purpose is protect the Dark Sceptre and annihilate your company. How the Dark Sceptre is recovered and destroyed is left up to the player to find out.

Dark Sceptre is a complex interactive arcade adventure which can be played by the use of a joystick. Moving the joystick left or right flicks through the characters that you currently control, showing their current status and whereabouts in graphics and text forms. Moving the joystick up or down highlights one of the five major options. These are Watch, Scan, Check, Plan and Quit. Pressing fire when one of these options is highlighted may take you to another sub-menu or switch control to another character.

Watch: when one of your men is involved in combat, you hear the clash of steel, but you cannot interfere in a fight to determine its outcome – the result is entirely dependent on the individuals' personalities – selecting watch shows the character currently fighting.

Scan: a map of the Western Isles with the whereabouts of your characters indicated and the position of your current character highlighted. **Check:** a run down on the current character's personality, a list of his present orders and any objects he may be carrying.

Plan: most complex command available and really the whole crux of the game; a sub-menu of possible commands you may give your characters. Moving the joystick up or down highlights each command. Selecting one takes you to another sub-menu to choose the object or character that is subject to the command. Commands – and there are many – range from killing the enemy to charming them onto your side.

The characters have their own attributes which affect how well they are able to carry out your orders, some are better suited to some tasks than others. All told there are eight different types of personality: Thane, the commander who leads your group; Mystic, beings with magical powers; Herald, good for giving messages; Assassin, a hunter and killer; Reaper, strikes fear into others; Fool, a talker; Savage, tough and resilient; Thralls, who are simple characters but numerous.

The final option, **Quit**, caters for loading and saving current positions in the game as well as abandoning a lost cause. It can, of course, also act as a useful pause mode for the essential tea and meal breaks without which the Western Isles would run dry.

SPECTRUM 48/128

Cassette: £7.95

To say that Dark Sceptre **is a complex game is a bit of an understatement. Mike Singleton has developed character interaction to a high level. Playing the game is fairly easy but getting anywhere takes some doing. Graphically it is impressive, the very large characters move convincingly and the fight scenes can be fun to watch. But what makes it so outstanding is that it oozes atmosphere; background story and plot are almost Tolkienesque.** Dark Sceptre **provides value for money – it won't be completed within a few goes. The task ahead is daunting but perserverance rewards with a game to capture the imagination.**

OVERALL 90%

OTHER FORMATS

At the moment we have no news of any plans to produce Dark Sceptre **for any other machine.**

"Dark Sceptre **is a complex game . . . but what makes it so outstanding is that it oozes atmos-phere . . .**"

Mike Singleton's new graphical adventure arrives and proves to be a thought provoker – Spectrum screen



PRESS ANY KEY

UGLY MUGS

MAD BALLS
Ocean

Denton Design have been busy of late, what with *Flash Point* (reviewed this issue), *Where Time Stood Still* and *Eco* (both previewed) and now *Mad Balls*, which is based on the TV cartoon and the toys.

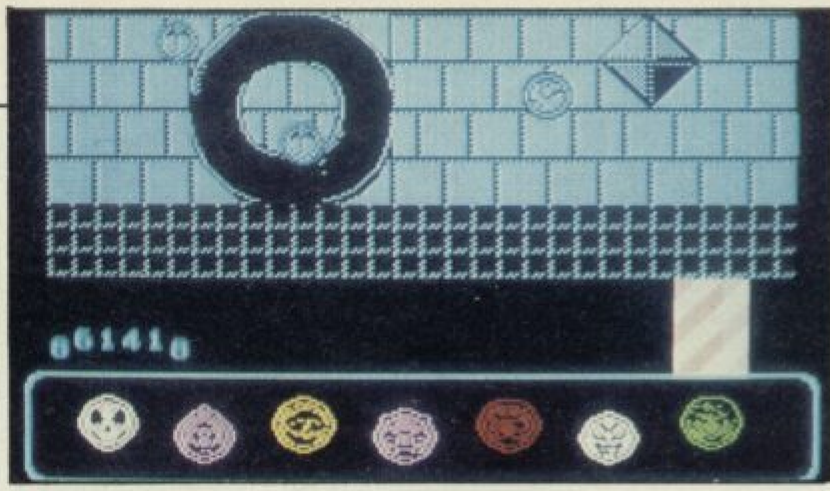
Set on their home world of Orb, the Mad Balls are forever bouncing around colliding with the terrain and one another. Their names are charming; Dust Brain, Slobulus, Swine Sucker and Fist Face are just a few, and give an indication of their odious characters and their equally dubious eating habits.

Beginning the game as Dust Brain, your objective is to become top Mad Ball, a rank requiring the capture of all other Mad Balls on Orb. Typically, they are opposed to this and do their utmost to kill you by colliding and pushing you off platform edges.

The nature of the licensed characters might lead one to think that this is a garishly coloured game full of larger than life ugly faces. Not so; the graphical presentation is actually reminiscent of the Gremlin Graphics *Re-Bounder*. Viewed from above, your Mad Ball bounds around the multi-directional scrolling high platforms of Orb, bouncing against other balls and landing on various objects to collect points, special abilities and food.

Dustbins and Goals are strewn about. Forcing other balls into Goals makes them join Dust Brain's side; falling into a Dustbin drops your current Mad Ball into a tube, any friendly balls inside roll along and push another ball out, captured balls becoming extra lives.

Balls have their own individual ratings (up to a maximum of eight points each) for speed of movement, strength (for withstanding collisions) and hunger level. The lower the hunger rating, the slower a Mad Ball's energy decreases. Each ball needs a different form of food, eaten by bouncing on it, to keep up energy. Food includes tasty morsels of fish heads, bones and even blood!



A Spectrum shot of **Mad Balls**

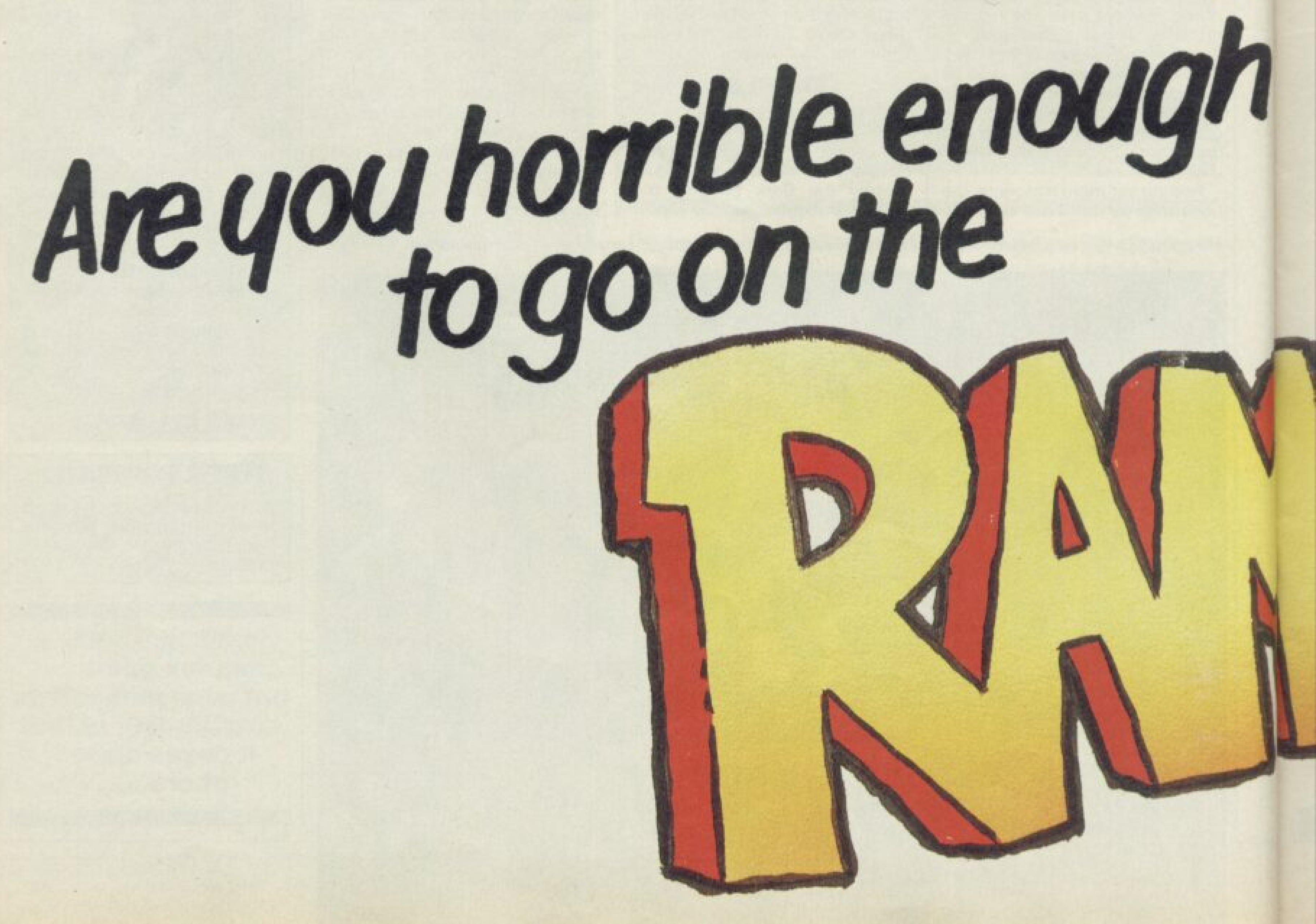
Terrain features can be usefully employed; springboards and catapults give a longer bounce, while oil slicks cause the Mad Ball to slide around. Bubbles and fried eggs give out extra points if bounced upon, and points are also gained for collecting items and bumping Mad Balls down Goals or off the platform edges.

Although *Mad Balls*'s graphics are not thrilling, they are effective in a utilitarian way, and some of the balls on the Commodore do manage to look really ugly. Plenty of levels to explore and interaction with useful items helps keep the game going. However, apart from capturing other balls, there is not a lot else to *Mad Balls* and an extra task to perform could have given the game far more scope.

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £12.95

Colour is nicely, if simply, used, providing a less cluttered impression than, say, Re-Bounder**. The idea of swapping between captured balls is clever and works well graphically. There may not be enough content to justify a long-term interest, but one thing** Mad Balls **isn't short on is playability, and that makes it a fun game. Generally, it is a 'jolly' good game, that falls just short of making it into the top grade.**

OVERALL 72%



SPECTRUM 48/ 128
Cassette: £7.95
December

The monochrome playing area complemented by coloured balls in the tube, offers a crisp image. Gameplay looks identical, but watch out for a version update in the next issue.

AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95
December

Keep an eye out for the version update. Expect the colours to be similar to the Commodore, but the multi-directional scrolling could be a problem.

"Plenty of levels to explore and interaction with useful items helps keep the game going."

VERSION UPDATE
Refrogger

RANARAMA
Hewson

Atari ST **£19.99**

WHEN it first appeared on the popular 8-bit machines (**Steve Turner** first wrote it for the Spectrum) *Ranarama* met with critical acclaim; in reappraising *Gauntlet* play-alikes for the Spectrum CRASH even reckoned it outdid the genre founder.

The player takes control of Mervyn, a sorcerer's apprentice, who through miscasting of spells, has turned into a frog. After a warlock invasion of his dungeon Mervyn's task is to destroy them all and hopefully find salvation in a return to human form. To aid him in this task, offensive and defensive spells can be collected, but only after defeating the warlocks in ritual combat can the spells be freed for collection.

Ritual combat involves rearranging the scrambled letters of 'Ranarama' within a time limit. Once freed, the spells can be used to provide stronger shields, greater firepower, defeat tougher opponents and locate hidden doors. The more powerful the spell in use, the quicker Mervyn's limited energy is drained, although he can regain it by collecting energy crystals and casting Power spells.

Scattered around the dungeon are monster generators, which should be destroyed, and Glyphs which perform selected tasks; lower levels can be entered by using Travel Glyphs, Power Glyphs are used to destroy the enemy in a room, whilst Glyphs of Seeing provide a map of the currently explored level. A Glyph of Sorcery provides information on the current range of spells available.

COMMENT

Ranarama **on the ST has everything. Fast action, a large dose of strategy, good, finely detailed graphics with rooms viewed from above in** Gauntlet **style and some excellent sampled sounds and speech. The game has been improved considerably whilst still retaining the playability which made the 8-bit versions so good. Careful, strategic use of spells is required in order to survive the hazards of each level.** Ranarama **is not just a straightforward 8 to 16-bit conversion, but a polished, excellent upgrade from Hewson.**

ATARI ST
OVERALL 86%



Steve Turner's Spectrum masterpiece is not just a conversion, but a fully-fledged ST game – Atari ST screen

PRESS ANY KEY

THE HARDEST HUNK

FREDDY HARDEST
Imagine

Breasting bravely on the wave of *Game Over*, this is Imagine's third release from **Dinamic**, the Spanish software house who also brought us *Army Moves*. Dinamic are Z80 programmers, so Imagine's in-house team prepared *Freddy Hardest* for the Commodore.

All-round macho man, high-lifer and self-fancied spy Freddy Hardest, blasts into space following a 'small party', plays Space Invaders with a meteor storm, and inevitably crash-lands on the moon of the planet Ternat. By an incredible coincidence (and a spot of luck, otherwise there wouldn't be a game to follow) the moon also contains the alien base of Kaldar.

His only hope of getting off the moon is to discover the Kaldarian base, hi-jack a ship and hi-tail it off. The moon's surface is pitted with chasms and bubbling craters, guarded by robots and populated by nasty alien fauna; a kick deals with the orbiting robots, moon creatures are seen off with a swift laser bolt.

Getting into the base, once it is found, is no problem since reaching the end of part one gives you an access code which you enter as soon as part two has been uploaded (Spectrum 128 is a single load). The Kaldarians aren't so easily disposed of, immune to laser fire, Freddy has no alternative but to resort to fisticuffs, and whilst he enjoys this kind of 'full blown bruise up', it does hinder the task of getting the Captain's Code – essential to take off – from 16 computer terminals scattered throughout three of the base's four levels. The fourth level houses four colour-coded ships, and having selected one, only the correct colour-coded computer information is of any use.

The ship will need fuel too and that involves collecting the appropriately coloured nuclear cells, placing them in, and operating, a loading lift from a nearby loading computer terminal. Lifts can also be used to access the base's different levels and tunnels used to move to other parts of the current level.

In general *Freddy Hardest* suffers most – the graphics on all machines being jolly enough to delight the eye – from not being hard enough, unless it's in a fake kind of way, as on the 64 version, where collision detection is almost too fine-tuned to be fair. So while this makes an ideal game for the younger player, it does mean that the street-cred brigade are less likely to find much more than an immediate appeal.

AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95

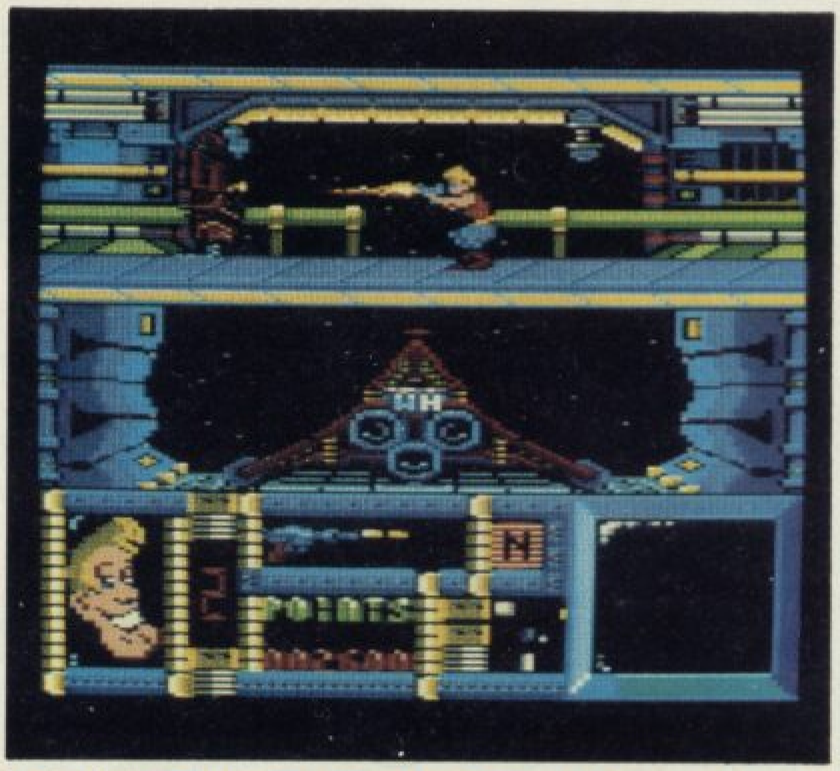
As is the case with most Dinamic games on the Amstrad, this is highly detailed graphically, and makes good use of colour all round. But the Amstrad first level is too easy, the main cause being lenient collision detection. The second level has even more colour and detail and with the large number of screens, makes for much more of a challenge, although it shouldn't take too long to complete.

OVERALL 69%

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £7.95

It suffers a bit in comparison due to the limited use of colour but in one sense copes better – the graphics are well detailed, almost like cartoons. The film style opening is a nice touch and adds to the game's all-round humour. A too easy first levels is virtually made redundant once the access code is gained, but this applies to all formats. A playable, nicely put together release from Dinamic, but too soon completed to have high lastability.

OVERALL 67%



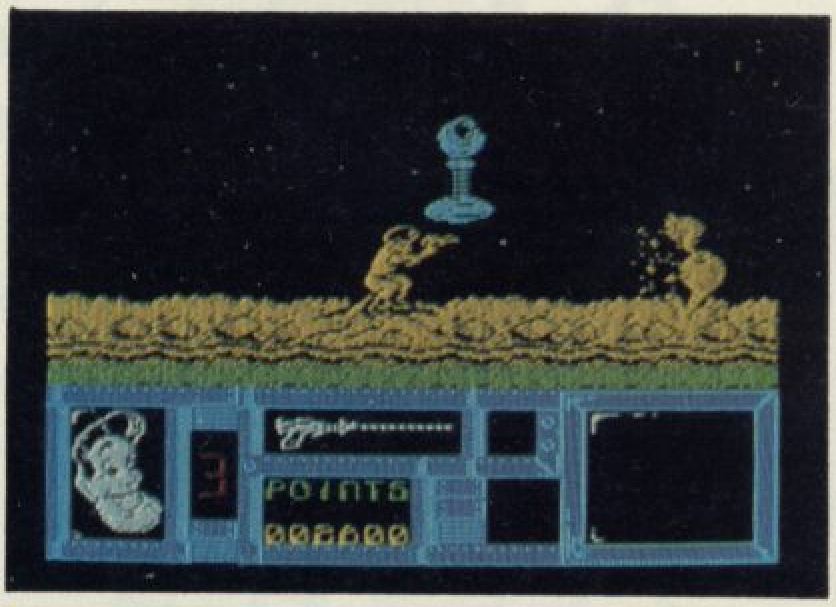
Loads of colour and dashing graphics for the Amstrad CPC as hunk and all round macho man Freddy leaps for space

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £12.95

The 64 version is definitely the Hardest! The aliens and robots move around much quicker; on the first level, Freddy needs to make almost perfect jumps to land on the floating islands and losing a life for being a pixel out is very frustrating. The second level is straight out of Ocean's earlier V, but a lot better in execution, and surprisingly quite easy. Level two's graphics look messy compared with those of level one, and the main sprite is barely average.

OVERALL 62%

Looking for Kaldar on Ternat, Freddy encounters craters and robots by the score – Spectrum screen



" . . . ideal for the younger player, Freddy Hardest **suffers most from not being hard enough for the street-cred brigade . . . "**

THE COST OF INFLATION

AIRBALL

Microdeal

No-one's ever satisfactorily explained quite what it is wizards are supposed to do, and perhaps this lack of social and structural fulfillment in their lives is what has traditionally made them such irritable and, indeed, impulsive fellows when it comes to the transmogrification – they're always turning someone into something they would rather not be, such as a frog, or a newt or a pickled onion. The wizard in *Airball* has a rather more delicate sense of inverted humour however . . .

It would be hard to imagine just what it was you did to annoy the wicked wizard this time round, but enough of metaphysics and down to the practical; the fact is, you are a ball of air, the wizard's turned you into something resembling one of those rainbow-hued glycerine bubbles that might have come out of a small can of bubble liquid purchased from Woolworths.

This wouldn't be so bad – might even be nice to waft around for a bit – if it wasn't for the fact that the wizard was feeling really mean and made you an extremely fragile airball with a slow leak. Worse still, you've been cast down into the wizard's mansion containing over 150 rooms packed with spiked balls, sharp pointed icicles, cacti, vast chasms, pits, killer pads and other delights just waiting to burst your fragile skin and lose you one of your four lives. There's a task of course; wicked wizards fall into two categories, the ones who have to be destroyed, and those whose irritability can be appeased by solving a problem for them. In this case, the mealy-mouthed mage would like you to search the mansion and recover his spellbook. In return he might just give you back your human form.

Designers Eddy Scio and Pete Lyon have opted for the now-traditional isometric perspective format of 3-D, with rooms containing doorways, staircases and multi-layered platforms. The rich, ever-changing combinations of pattern all go to make *Airball* the definitive forced-perspective game.

The airball can be guided around the oddly decorated mansion, collecting jewels for points and objects to help in the task. These lie in positions awkward for your average bubble to reach, and include pumpkins, crucifixes, tins of beans, statues, a candle, a Buddha, a torch, the sort of things you always find lying around in the castle of a wizard so untidy, he can't even find his own spellbook. The candle and torch illuminate darkened rooms, while the others can be dropped and clambered up to reach high up doors or other items.

But don't forget that leaky envelope of yours, all the while it's getting worse, and letting out all the air takes away a life. Usefully, for once, the wizard also forgot to tidy away several air pumps, and these can be jumped upon to restore you to flatulent health. Don't stay on too long, though, or you risk over-inflating . . .

Once the spellbook has been found, it's back to the start room to complete the game . . . or is it?



Deep in the wicked wizard's lair, lurks a fragile bubble of air. Only through the player's care, may he his delicate skin repair . . . Atari ST screen



AIRBALL CONSTRUCTION KIT

Microdeal
Diskette: £14.95

When you get fed up of playing Airball in the castle provided by the game, you might, if you're still hooked on it, want to get a copy of this useful utility program by Scio and Lyon which lets you redecorate and refurnish to your heart's content. Every single graphic in Airball can be manipulated to provide anything from a ten-room child's-play dungeon to a horrific 200-room mega-mansion. Running in a GEM environment, creation ought to be a doddle, but oddly the construction part itself isn't that easy to use, and it's very easy to overwrite already saved rooms unless great care is exercised. But the infinite game possibilites certainly make it a worthwhile purchase for any Airball fan.

OVERALL 75%

ATARI ST

Diskette: £24.95

The ST graphics are highly detailed, pleasingly coloured and obviously a lot of thought has gone into them. The two main tunes are equally excellent, genuinely adding to the game's playability. But controlling the action with either mouse or joystick is awful, so using the keyboard is definitely recommended. Apart from this minor problem, the game plays like a dream. Airball on the ST is highly polished, graphically and sonically of top quality, and a delight to play.

OVERALL 85%

AMIGA

Don't expect a version until after the New Year, but it should be even better than the ST version. No prices or release dates have been announced as yet.

"The rich, ever-changing combinations of pattern all go to make Airball the definitive forced-perspective game."

VERSION UPDATE

Don't spare the rods

TAU CETI
CRL
PC **£19.95**

PETE COOKE's classic thinking man's shoot-'em-up, having made its way successfully onto the Commodore 64, Amstrad and through a sequel, *Academy*, is now available for the PC.

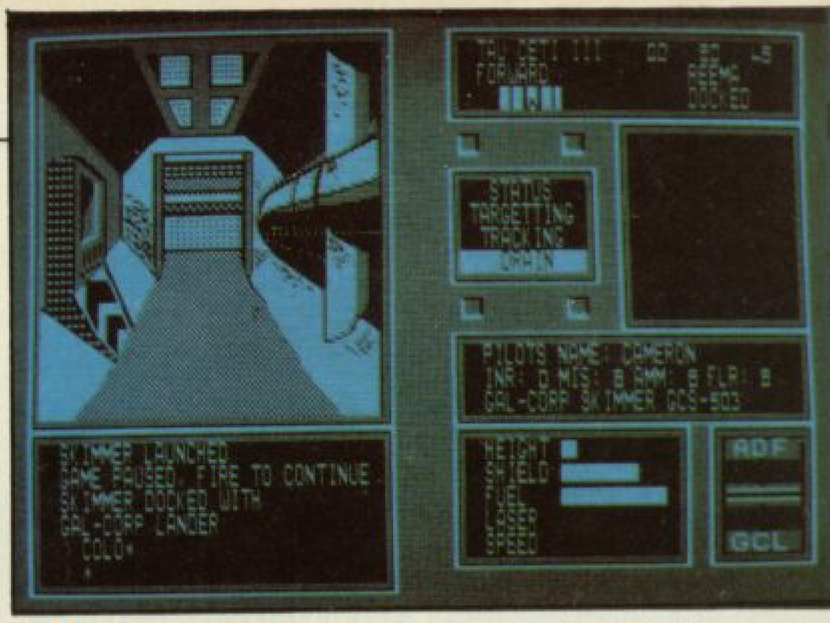
The automatic defence systems of Tau Ceti III have gone berserk, and can only be stopped by shutting down the main reactor in the capital city of Centralis. The game is played from within a hovercraft, well equipped for the task – though things could be better. Out to stop you are city defence forts and Hunter attack craft. Along the way military and civilian supply centres can be entered to re-equip your craft and collect the all important reactor rods.

In its previous incarnations, *Tau Ceti* enjoyed huge success, and it has translated to the PC very well.

COMMENT

Tau Ceti has some wonderful graphical effects, with the buildings and other objects viewed in very effective, solid 3-D. The PC adaption retains the very clever shadowing effect of the 8-bit versions; it also retains the depth of game and should provide PC owners with a challenge to last for months.

PC
OVERALL 87%



Pete Cooke's original Spectrum style translates well onto the PC, providing rich-looking graphics

I WANNA BE YOUR THRILL INSTRUCTOR

METAL GEAR
Konami

MSX CARTRIDGE ONLY

Konami has supported the UK MSX market (consisting of some two hundred thousand users) since its inception a couple of years ago. The base market (that's in Japan for the uninitiated) consists of over two million consumers who are treated to a 220-page monthly magazine dedicated solely to MSX. At present there is no information concerning which of the 60 possible Japanese authors who create for the MSX are responsible for *Metal Gear*, but whoever they may be they certainly seem to know their business.

News of the development somewhere in the small country of Outer Heaven deep in the South African jungles, of an 'ultimate weapon', codename Metal Gear, reaches Special Operations unit Fox Hound. Fox Hound send in special agent Grey Fox to get more information. Unfortunately all contact with Grey Fox is lost. Undeterred, Fox Hound dispatch another recruit, Solid Snake, to learn the whereabouts of their man and attempt to destroy Metal Gear. Armed only with a transceiver our hero sets out on his very first mission.

The opening sequence shows Solid Snake (the strange code names are probably due to the Japanese/English translation) wading through the river adjacent to the enemy base preparing to infiltrate. Once he has landed, the player takes control of him using keyboard or keyboard and joystick. The aerial viewpoint shows Snake in 'sneak' mode, running left, right, up and down in search of weapons and equipment to aid his quest, whilst all the time attempting to avoid the numerous guards.

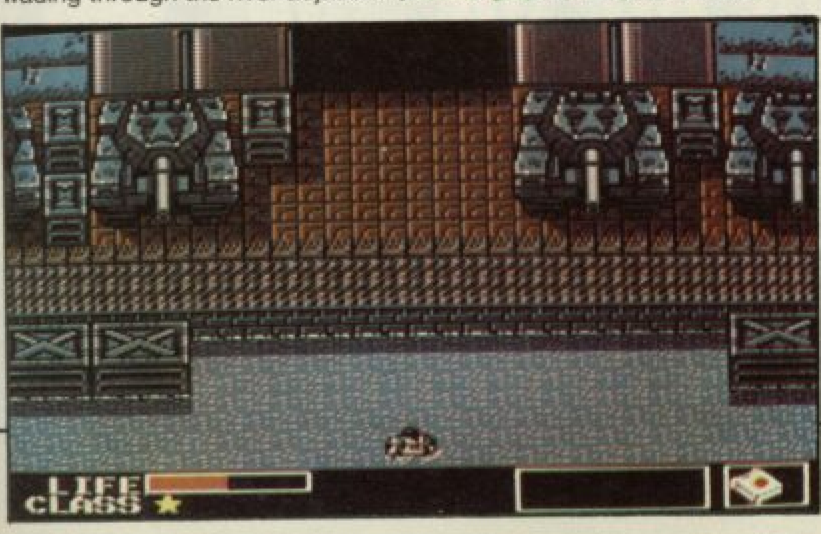
Should he be spotted or trigger one of the many elaborate alarms, the game changes from 'sneak' to 'alarm' mode, all hell breaks loose and the chances of survival decrease rapidly as guards home in for the kill. The only way to attain 'sneak' mode again is by killing a specified number of the enemy or, in some cases, by moving quickly to another location.

The equipment required to complete the mission may be found in storehouses, trucks or on the guards themselves. A number of prisoners are incarcerated within the complex and should Snake successfully rescue them he is rewarded with information, an increase in his strength, a higher rank and greater potential for carrying weapons. Further information may be offered at intervals via the transceiver through which the Big Boss is in constant contact.

An information panel shows Snake's life force, stars to mark his rank, a graphical representation of which particular weapon/object he is brandishing and how much ammunition he has left. The complete inventory may be accessed at any time and any of the items therein may be swapped with the current one being used. For example, a security door probably won't open if shown a gas mask but take the key–card from the inventory (if it's there) and access is achieved. There are plenty of realistic spot FX in *Metal Gear*, what with alarms, gunfire and explosions although the music, which unfortunately cannot be turned off, does tend to grate after an hour or so.

Konami do seem to be looking after the MSX user and although the market may be a little small, the quality of the games does at least match that of the software available for the larger user groups. *Metal Gear* would certainly be a good addition to any MSX gameplayer's collection.

The start screen from Metal Gear (MSX), which gives a good impression of the graphic delights to follow



MSX
Cartridge: £20.95

The initial impression of disdain at this non too-impressively animated macho man may rapidly change on delving deeper. The area of play is enormous, the backdrops impressive, and each room contains a different puzzle to be solved with either brain or brawn. Traps, security systems and guards abound ensuring that the action and suspense never wanes. A good sense of being there is accomplished and the urge to get further into the game is quite strong. If this standard of Konami software is maintained then maybe more people will think hard about joining the other 200,000 MSX owners.

OVERALL 79%

MSX CLUB NEWS

A club for MSX users has been started by David J Krawczyk for people who require information about hardware and software for their machines. The club may be reached at this address:
MSX Central Computer Club
14 The Waredens Avenue
Allesley Village
Coventry
CV5 9GJ

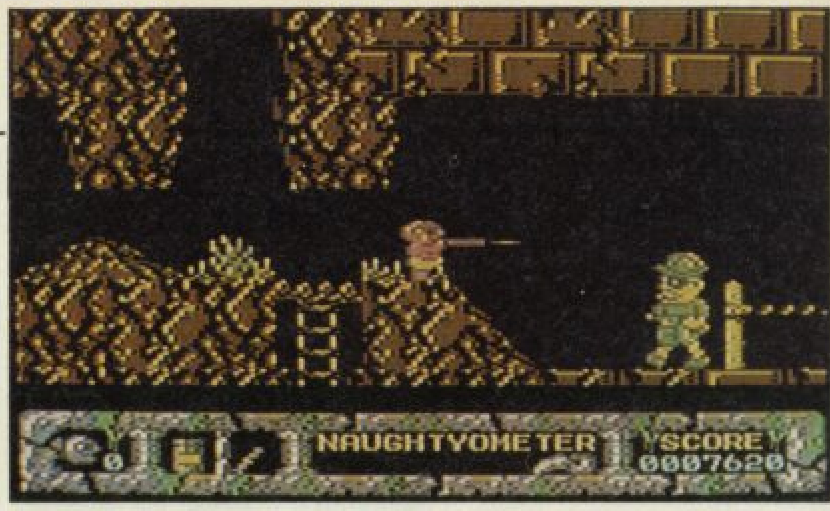
" . . . the action and suspense never wanes – Metal Gear **would certainly be a good addition to any MSX gameplayer's collection."**

PRESS ANY KEY

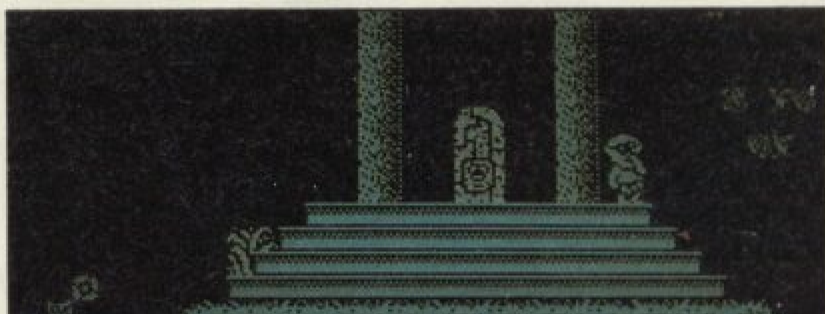
A BABE IN ARMS

JACK THE NIPPER II

Gremlin Graphics



One of the many colourfully busy screens of adolescent mayhem from the follow up – Commodore 64 screen



The Spectrum version, too, manages some crisply detailed, rich-looking graphics

Gremlin Graphics have frequently capitalised successfully on cute characters in their 8-bit repertoire, although not all of them have worked as well as the ubiquitous Monty Mole (their 1985 'Beaver' game never even made it to the shops, culled as it was in the late programming stages). The argument goes: if you have done it once, why not repeat the success but hopefully better still – and *Jack The Nipper* was definitely a big hit. Now the naughty be-nappied nipper is back . . .

. . . And he's gone too far this time – in fact right round the world – for his last prank gained him a deportation order to Australia, and having seen how the outback denizens treated Mick Dundee, Jack isn't too happy about this. So during the flight down-under, he jumps out and nappychutes into what turns out to be . . . deepest Jungleland.

As in the first *Nipper One*, Jack's objective is to achieve a naughtiness rating of 100%. To help in this task, he can use such useful objects as grease, logs, onions and dynamite (!). Performing naughty deeds boosts Jack's naughtyometer to that all-important top level.

To traverse the jungle, Jack uses slippery slides, tree vines – Tarzan-like to avoid swamps and quicksand – rickety bridges and even an old mine car on the Spectrum – the Commodore game contains dark passages to get through. The jungle is populated with all manner of beasts, including monkeys, elephants, parrots, hippos, Mick Dundee's nappy-snatching crocodile, as well as some very unfriendly hunters and natives. Bumping into any means losing a life. But it is survival of the fittest, and Jack isn't defenceless; by collecting coconuts and blowpipes, he can see off even the most hostile tigers and rhinos. Extra lives in the shape of dummies (Spectrum) and whistles (Commodore) can be found, with shields providing limited immunity from attack by jungle creatures.

Jack isn't the only member of his family to be roaming the jungle. Jack's dad has also parachuted into the tropical forest, and if he catches up with his son then Jack's jungle japes are over. Lasting appeal once completed will probably be slight, but with such a large playing area, that shouldn't be too much of a problem.

SPECTRUM 48/128

Cassette: £7.99

The Spectrum is marvellously adept at producing arcade-adventures with multitudes of screens, and this is one of them. The graphics look and work really well, the detail in them excellently captures the jungly atmosphere despite restricted use of colour. The sound effects (nothing extra on 128) play along merrily and really add to the game. This is a fine arcade-adventure.

OVERALL 81%

AMSTRAD

Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

This resembles the Spectrum version, though with a few more colours mixed into the graphics. In fact the colours are often garish, look out of place in some locations, and lose a lot of the game's atmosphere because of it. Playability is retained, however, pity it fails on the visuals.

OVERALL 74%

COMMODORE 64/128

Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

Jack The Nipper II **on the 64 is set in a scrolling jungle rather than being flip screen. There is a lot of graphical variation and the sprites are pleasant to look at. The amusing use of sound and some neat graphic effects (try walking down a dark passage) combine to make this a FUN game. Just as playable as the others, the combination of better tunes and neater use of colour make it the best version.**

OVERALL 84%

"Lasting appeal once completed will probably be slight, but with such a large playing area, that shouldn't be too much of a problem."

VERSION UPDATE

Motorway Mayhem

MEAN STREAK
Mirrorsoft

Commodore 64/128 Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £12.95

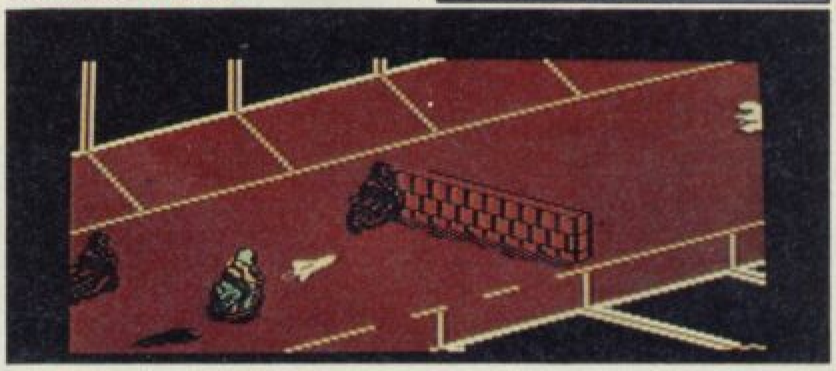
DALALI SOFTWARE (creators of *Yogi Bear*) enjoyed a mixed reception for this when it was first released on the Spectrum. Set in the 23rd century on a *Zaxxon* style scrolling battletrack (supposedly the ruined M25 of yesteryear), the player rides a powerful motorbike armed with machine guns and missiles in a race against enemy bikers to the motorway end, collecting extra fuel, arms and oil along the way. As a incentive to play the game, a real life £400 motorbike is waiting for the first player to reach the battletrack's finish.

COMMENT

A fast scrolling, entertaining release which is easy to get into and very playable. The graphics look good and move smoothly, although collision detection is suspect at times. Mean Streak **is difficult and does not contain much in the way of variation, but it has sufficient depth and gameplay to keep bikers on the battletrack for quite a while.**

COMMODORE 64/128
OVERALL 71%

Commodore 64 screen



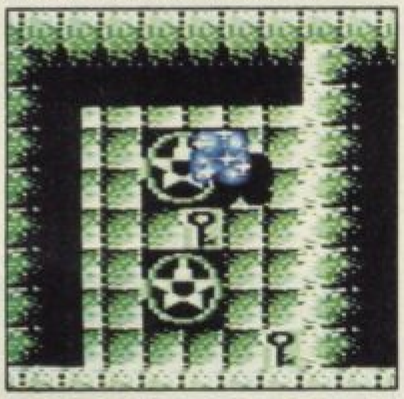
PRESS ANY KEY

HEDEX WITH DEXTERITY

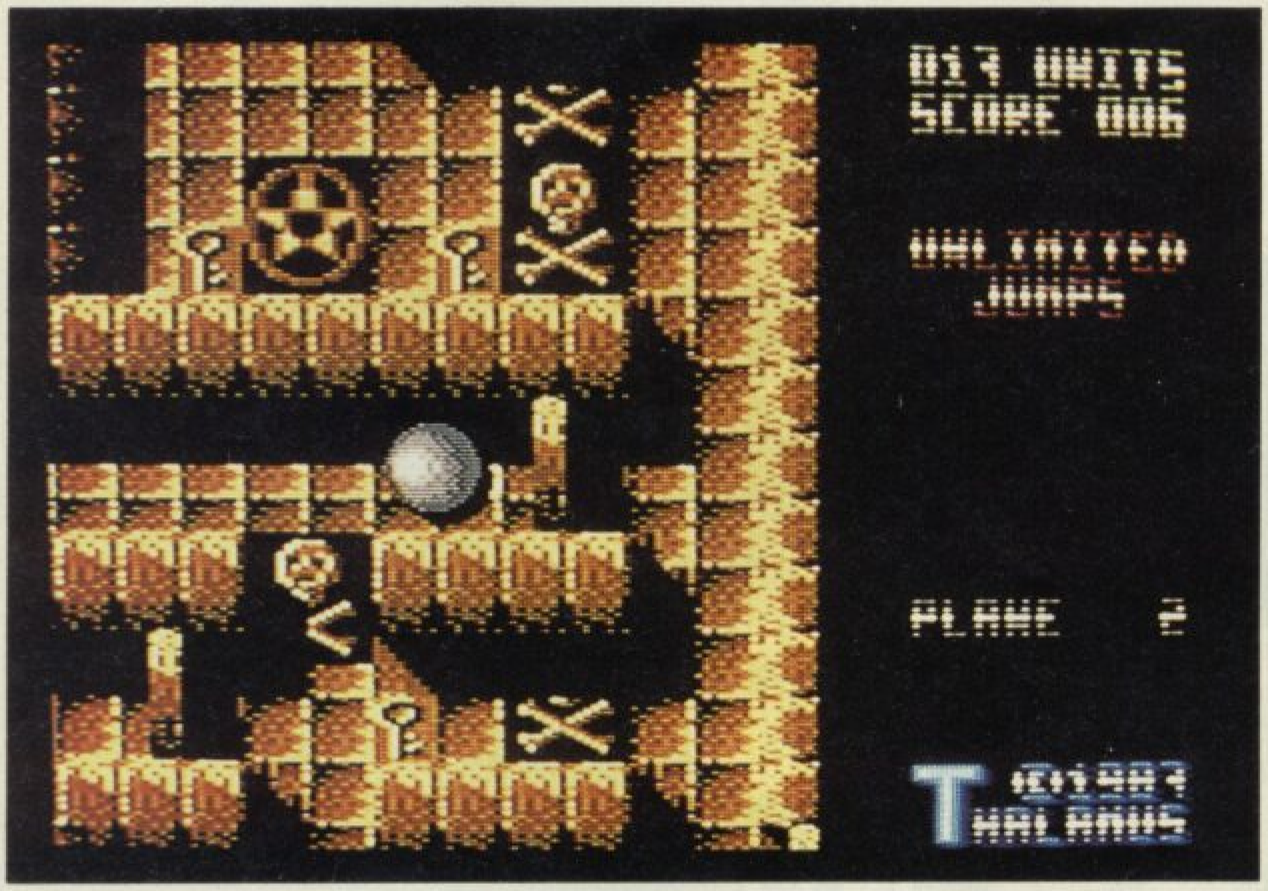
QUEDEX
Thalamus

Thalamus's third release is a departure from their previous shoot-'em-ups *Sanxion* and *Delta*, since it's a game of control dexterity. It is, however, by the same author as the previous two, the Finn with the oddly Greek name of **Stavros Fasoulas** – and *Quedex* makes it a hattrick of hits for him. Thalamus is about to break the mould with its fourth release, *Hunter's Moon* by **Martin Walker** – more news of that when we have it.

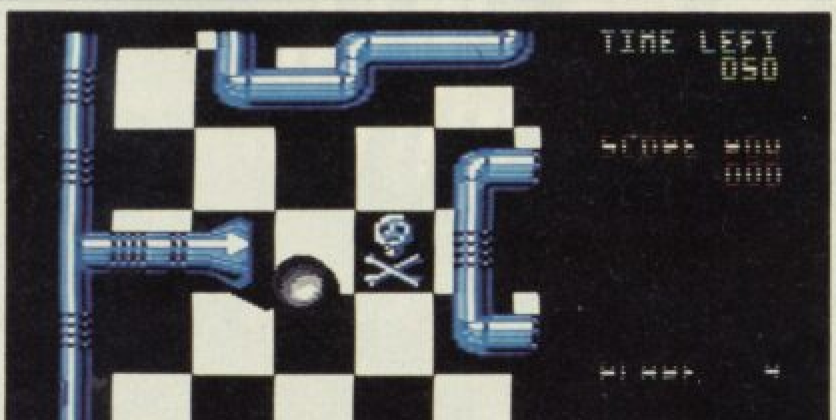
Yes, it's another ball game, but Fasoulas has discovered a fresh approach to the subject and devised a fiendish test of skill set to his typically sharp, eye-grabbing graphics. There can't be many dextrous joystick movements left which *Quedex* doesn't test to the limit.



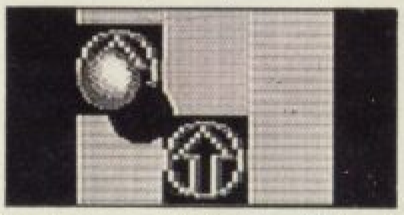
In *Quedex* – the Quest For Ultimate Dexterity – the player controls a metallic ball viewed from above as it rolls along through ten playing areas, or planes, and each plane demands a different style of gameplay and joystick skill.



The controlling actions vary from plane to plane, in some keys and amulets have to be collected, whilst others involve simply moving the ball from one side of the plane to the other. A useful facility – almost essential in this type of game – is that planes may be attempted at any time and in any order, although an imposed time limit is continually ticking away whichever plane you are on. Running out of time brings on a bad case of game over. This situation is remediable by watching out for time units and collecting them, which gives extra time. Extra speed units give the ball a boost, and surprise objects are scattered throughout the planes with both beneficial and malefic effects.



The ball's movement varies considerably from plane to plane.



Moving up and down or left and right in some, with four-way movement in others. Every time you satisfactorily complete a plane, *Quedex* switches you into a sub-game where arrows flash in random directions, extra points being awarded if the ball successfully copies these directions.

The ball isn't just a holy-roller, it can jump over interfering obstacles and serious hazards such as deadly skulls, deep chasms and time-sapping electric seas. Depending on the selected plane, either unlimited jumps may be made, or specified number.

There are no foes to be defeated, no heads to be lopped off, hardly any damsels in distress and no alien hordes to be zapped, it's just you, your joystick and your hand-and-eye coodination, but if you can complete all of the planes, then at least there is the satisfaction of doing it – and the prize of Ultimate Dexterity to be won.

COMMODORE 64
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

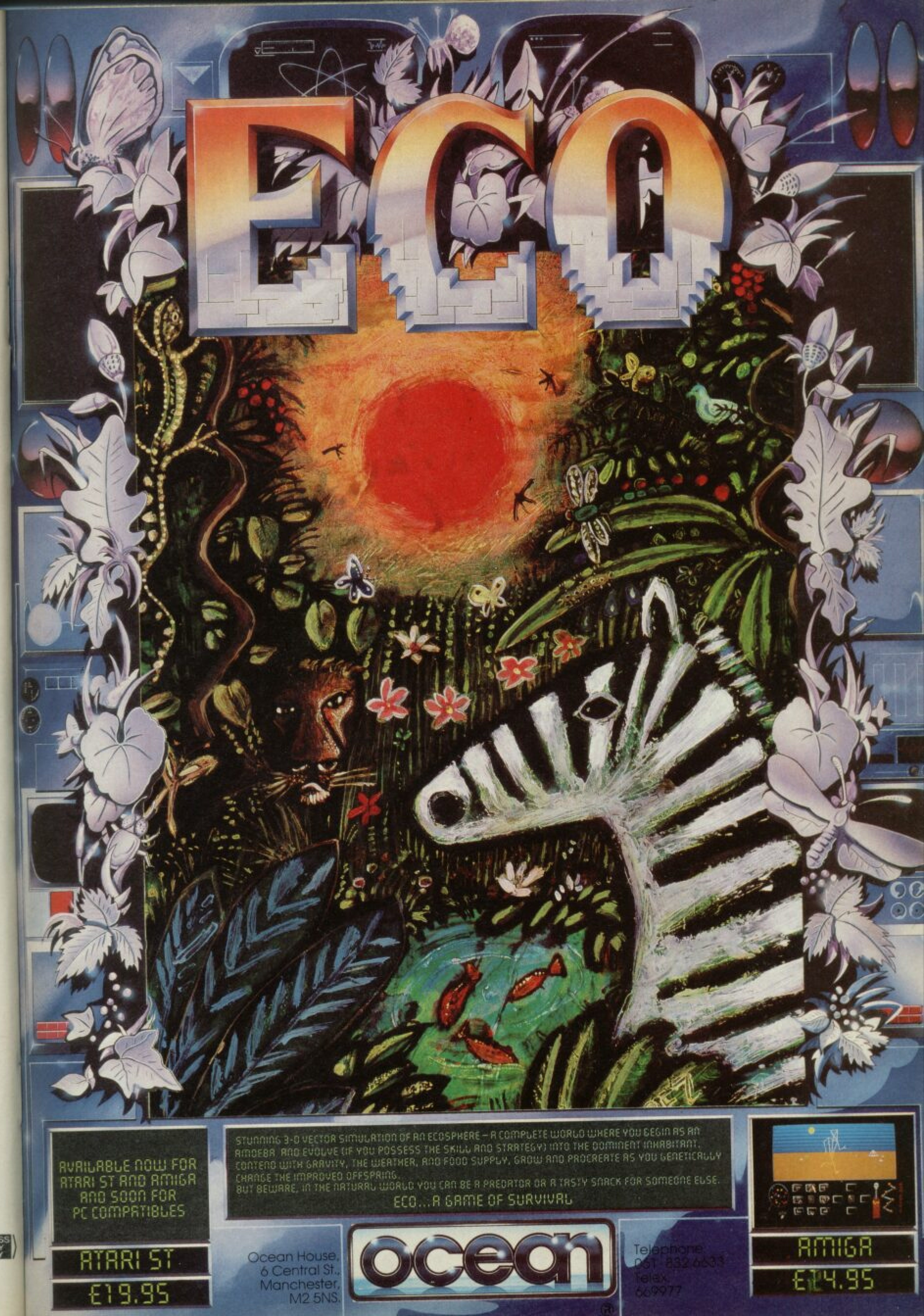
Quedex **is full of energy, the ball rolls along at a furious pace and, as a result, some planes may seem virtually impossible at first but perseverance and patience are the key words here. The 64 version is graphically outstanding, the ball is convincing in its movement and the plane graphics are detailed, varied and pleasing to look at. Since Rob Hubbard, who did the music for the previous two Thalamus games, has abandoned these shores for the States, his mantle falls to** Hagar The Horrible **who Rob nominated – a happiness in the midst of sadness, for the drivingly upbeat title tune suits the game perfectly; oddly, it isn't used in the game itself. If you thought you'd seen the last of the 'ball' game, then think again. Think *Quedex*.**

OVERALL 86%

OTHER FORMATS

So far conversions for Sanxion **and** Delta **have eluded Thalamus, although a Spectrum** Delta **was commenced, abandoned, and apparently restarted again – if it comes out, it will be after Christmas now. At present no conversion of** Quedex **is under way (and Stavros Fasoulas, who would like to do it for the Amiga himself, is stuck doing his obligatory National Service in Finland for a while), but 16-bit versions are planned.**

"... a fresh approach and a fiendish test of skill set to sharp, eye-grabbing graphics."

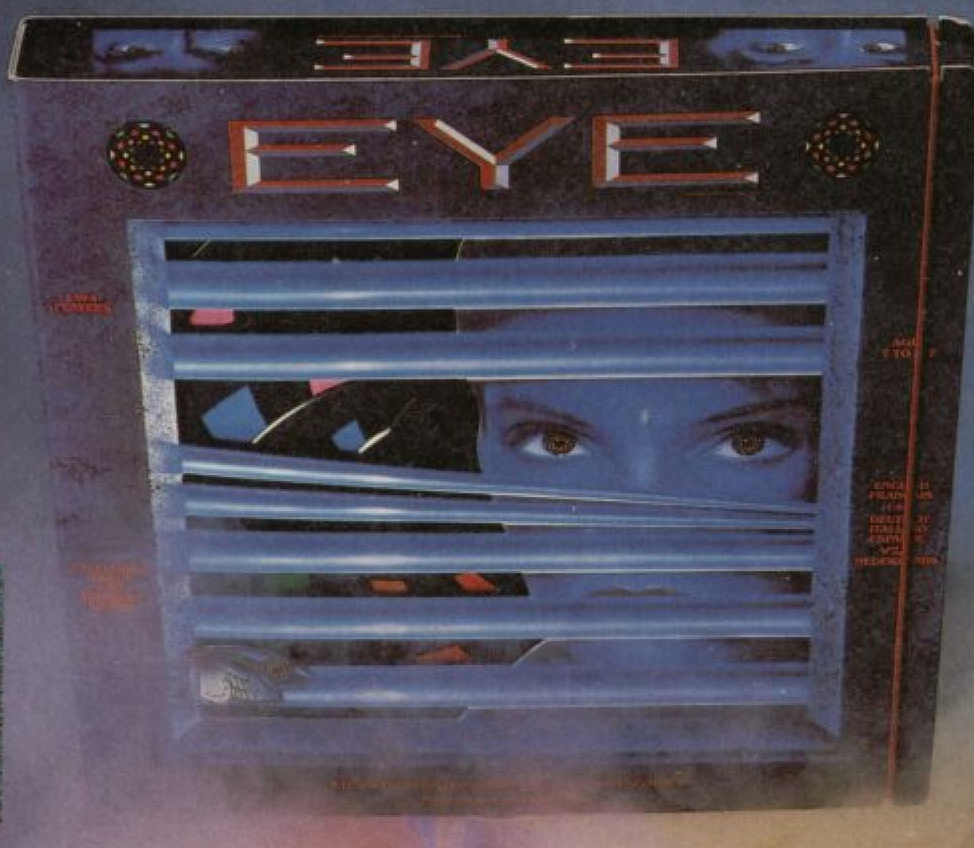


PRESS ANY KEY

IN THE LAND OF THE BLIND THE ONE EYE'D MAN IS KING

"More challenging and complex than Chess"

(Lee Rodwell – The Times, September 1987)





Actual Atari ST screen shots



Graphics vary according to format

Spectrum £9.95

Commodore 64/128 £9.95 (£14.95 Disk)

Atari ST £14.95

Amstrad £9.95 (£14.95 Disk)

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HEGOR DRAGONSLAYER

BARBARIAN
Psygnosis

Psygnosis was formed some two years ago from one of the many splinter groups that emerged from the old Imagine software house (before it became an Ocean label). The strong influence of **David Lawson**, driving force behind Imagine's famed but fated *Bandersnatch* 'mega-game' team, was clearly seen in the first Psygnosis game, *Brattacus*, which drew on Lawson's experience in designing *Bandersnatch*. *Barbarian* is also designed and coded by Lawson, with animation and graphics by **Garvan Corbett**.

Hegor the Barbarian grew up with the rough warrior teachings of Thoron, his father. Thus he was taught how to fight, drink and womanise, and his reputation as a man to be avoided soon spread far and wide among the more civilised of society. Though they gave him a wide berth, his skill as a dragon-slayer was well known, even revered, and the fact that he killed these fire-breathing beasts with such ferocious consistency helped mitigate the most negative reactions to his more animal habits.

Like father, like son, most of Hegor's savage traits could be laid at his father's feet, and indeed Thoron had made many enemies of his own, including one particularly nasty piece of work by the name of Necron, an evil being of awesome power who commanded a devilish band of subordinates. The feud between Thoron and Necron had built in intensity for many years until one day Necron decided to end the quarrel by sending forth his deadliest dragon ally, Vulcuran, to destroy Thoron.

A horrific struggle ensued, which Thoron lost. Upon hearing of this tragic battle, Hegor swore deadly revenge and dared to enter the underground kingdom of Necron in hope of slaying both Vulcuran and the mighty Necron. Should he succeed in finding a way to avoid Necron's deadly fire bolts and emerge triumphant then his destiny would be fulfilled and he would be king.

CARTOON MUSCLES

The quest opens with Hegor in the marshes just west of Necron's underground lair. Attempting to go in the opposite direction results in the Barbarian's swift demise – and offers an insight into the type of booby-trap that may lie ahead.

Hegor is depicted as a cartoon style character with glistening muscles and flowing blonde hair, animated through a selection of available movements ranging from walking and fighting to dropping everything and running away in blind terror. The detailed, scrolling backgrounds vary from marshy expanses to cavernous arenas, all of which are patrolled by deadly dogmen, giant soldiers and numerous other assorted assassins. When these single-minded subordinates are slain, their evil souls drift upwards to eternity as ghastly ghostly images. Hidden traps, modelled very much on those seen in *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, abound, demanding great care with every step taken.

Hegor may be controlled by mouse, keyboard or joystick (although the latter is not recommended because of the slow cursor movement) via a panel of icons at the base of the screen. These represent different actions; running, jumping, attacking, defending, walking and even fleeing along with the picking up, dropping and using of any items or objects found during the quest. The deeper into the underground empire Hegor journeys the tougher his opponents become, until finally he comes face to face with Necron himself.

There is no continuous game soundtrack or music, but detailed and accurate sounding spot effects can often make it acoustically frenetic. The omission of a save game facility is odd, but it's only a minor annoyance. *Barbarian* draws most successfully on expertise gained from a long history of arcade-adventures, but the implementation of so many good ideas, not least being the use of icons, which in this game are flexible and very fast to use, combined with a truly gothic atmosphere, makes it a novel and exciting experience.

Uncivilised savage, womaniser and local president of the dragon-slayers' club, Hegor the Barbarian fights his way through cavern and tunnel, monster and miasma and atmospherically gloomy graphics – Atari ST screen



AMIGA
Diskette: £24.95

Brilliant, great, wonderful and quite good too. Hegor stalks the caverns in very realistic fashion, hair waving, weapon at the ready and slightly crouched in preparation for anything. He needs to be! Necron's denizens are everywhere, attacking with axes, arrows and magic, but just wait til you see the dragon . . . ! Perhaps the booby-traps are a little unfair, as there's no warning of their presence, and that coupled with the lack of a save game facility can become tedious. But the urge to continue remains strong throughout. The large area to explore, the wonderful sound effects and the marvellous graphics all add up to a success for Psygnosis.

OVERALL 87%

ATARI ST
Diskette: £24.95

Barbarian **is a lot more playable than some of Psygnosis's previous releases. However the ST version suffers a little from jerky animation – a few more frames utilised in the movement department would have been better – and the collision detection could have been improved, but, as it stands, it's a very entertaining release. Cavern graphics are atmospheric and varied throughout, becoming more interesting the further you progress. The dragon is a particularly impressive creature if you're unlucky enough to meet it! The sampled sound effects are superb, as realistic as you can expect from the ST, and they really do add to the game. With some extremely devious traps to avoid, countless screens and many evil creatures to defeat, Barbarian will certainly get ST owners burning the midnight oil.**

OVERALL 80%

OTHER VERSIONS
Psygnosis have no plans to convert Barbarian **to any other machine at present.**

" . . . a truly gothic atmosphere, makes it a novel and exciting experience."

SMARTER THAN THE AVERAGE

YOGI BEAR

Piranha

Humorous cartoon characters have not fared too well in game adaptions, the likes of *Asterix* (Melbourne House), Fred Flintsone (*Yabba Dabba Doo*, Quicksilva) and *Road Runner* (US Gold) all suffered some nefarious contraction of their original charm. Only *Scooby Doo* (Elite) maintained his equilibrium . . . with difficulty. Now it is Piranha's turn, with the lesser fame of Berk successfully under their belts, to uncork the charm with one of the oldest of TV-created cartoon figures.

There is always something unpleasant going on in Jellystone Park, and on this particular day it is an unfeeling hunter who has incarcerated small Boo-Boo within an iron cage. Luckily for the hapless bear, his friend – a larger brown bear who wears a hat and tie and answers to the name of Yogi – is feeling particularly fearless and embarks upon a quest to free him.

The dangers of Jellystone Park are all in the game, ferocious frogs, savage snakes, mean mooses, hot-tempered hunters and not to forget Ranger Smith. On his way, Yogi finds sustenance in abandoned picnic hampers or discarded fish. And then there are the toffee apples cunningly placed by his bondaged buddy. Not for eating, these sticky clues teach him the secret of the stepping stones which lie in Yogi's path to justice. But he must hurry, time is Yogi Bear's main enemy; he begins his rescue mission in January and must complete it before hibernation begins or Boo-Boo will be lost forever.

AVERAGE BEAR

Yogi Bear is programmed by Dalali Software (who did *Mean Streak* Commodore update this issue), and it has to be said that they have managed to retain *this* character's charm, and bind it up in a game of reasonable ingenuity. It is on the playability stakes that *Yogi Bear* loses some attraction (the review is based on the Commodore 64 version). Yogi scurries around avoiding rivers, trees, geysers and frogs, and it is through the pixel perfection demanded in jumping obstacles that the gameplay falters.

His basic directions are left to right (and up and down) along a path with snow capped mountains scrolling smoothly in parallax in the distance. Below is an information panel, showing Yogi's energy, lives, how far he is from Boo–Boo and what the date is (hibernation nears!). There is also a surprise panel for . . . well, surprises. Yogi can be controlled with either joystick or keyboard except on the Commodore 64, which is stick only. Apart from walking, Yogi can also duck and completely fox his assailants by turning into a bush.

High scores are not solely achieved by covering distance but also by surviving for any length of time, so failed rescuers who have been trying for a long while may not lose heart and perhaps be inspired to try again.



AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

We have seen nothing yet of the Amstrad version. It remains to be seen, therefore, what the playability factor will be like. It should be available before the next issue appears.

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.94

The Yogi sprite certainly looks like the Hanna and Barbera cartoon character and everything else of pictorial interest is implemented very well. THE GAMES MACHINE team's opinion is very mixed, ratings ranging from 45% to almost 70%, and reflecting more the personal preferences for the type of game and therefore the resistance to frustration caused by the playability problem.

SPECTRUM
Cassette: £9.95

Graphic implementation on the Spectrum is in black line drawing on a coloured ground (largely green) with a parallax background strip at the top of the screen. It allows for a good cartoonesque representation of the characters and fluid animation. As we go to press, we have not seen a finished version – due any day – and therefore cannot comment on playability.

"Yogi retains his charm in a game of reasonable ingenuity . . . it is the gameplay that falters."



A DIRTY TRACK

EXCITE BIKE
Nintendo

Cartridge only: £28.50

If you've ever had the urge to be a king of the dirtbike track, but are a bit of an armchair sportsman, then look no further than this latest addition to the racing genre. *Excite Bike* is a fast, horizontally scrolling game.

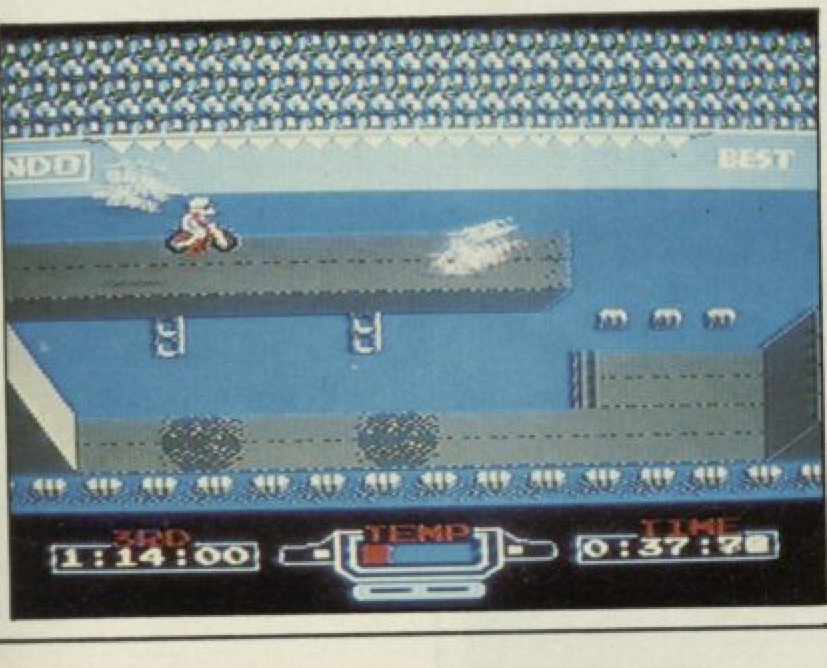
There are three selectable modes; race solo against the clock, race a horde of computer controlled bikers against the clock and track designer. The latter lets you make up a track and determine how many laps up to a maximum of nine are to be raced. It is easily mastered; pressing the A button moves the rider along the track, along the bottom of the screen is a list of letters from A to S (the different types of obstacle) tracked by a cursor on the control pad. Move the rider to the location of your choice, choose a letter, press the B button, and bingo, the ramp, mud hole whatever is placed. Carry on in this manner until you have as many obstacles as you want, then set the number of laps to be raced.

Preset, there are five increasingly difficult tracks to race over – any may be selected – but before each main race you first have to qualify in a challenge race by crossing the finish line in one of the top three positions. Bike control requires care, too much, and too little, power often leaves the rider in a tangled heap at the side of the track, especially when racing against computer riders as they bump and jostle you around the screen quite mercilessly.

COMMENT

Excite Bike's **graphics help make it a good looking game, but even with the addition of a DIY track-building kit, it gives a terrible feeling of déja vu. Racing games have been around in many shapes and guises for several years, and although this is very playable, it tires steadily as you play. Being so easy to play and master, it may appeal more to younger people, but we doubt whether there is much lasting appeal for hardened arcade or racing fans.**

OVERALL 52%



One of the later screens of two-wheeled addictive Nintendo fun

INTO AFRICA

PASSENGERS ON THE WIND II

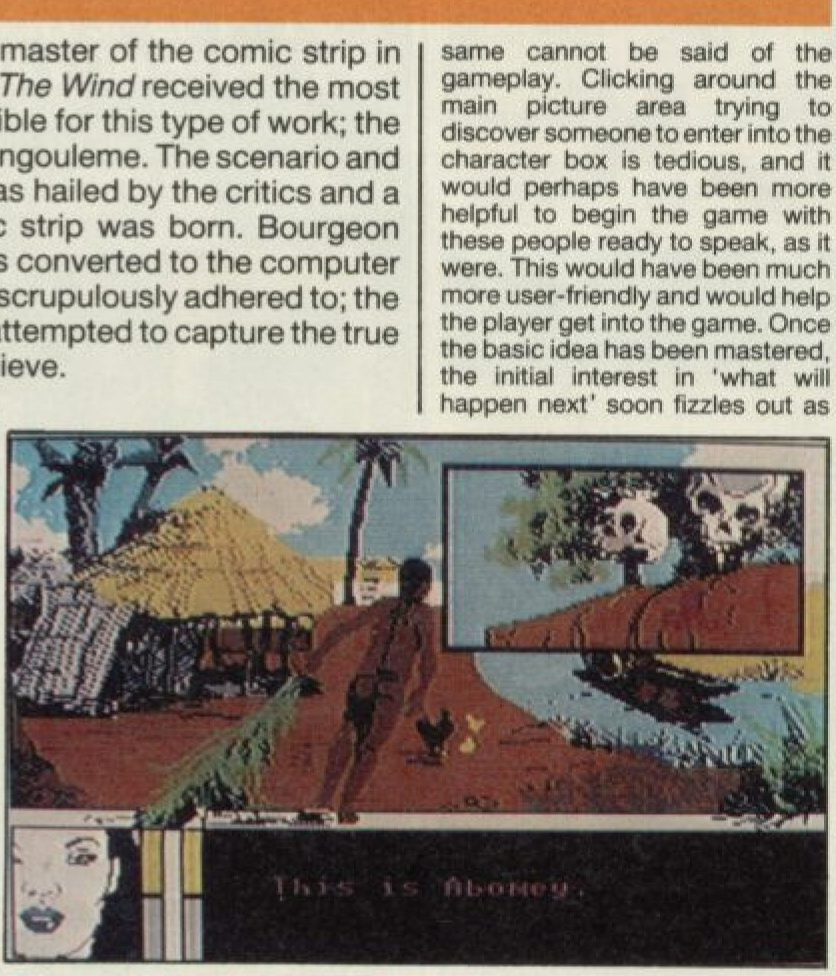
Infogrames

Francois Bourgeon is a master of the comic strip in France, *Passengers On The Wind* received the most prestigious reward possible for this type of work; the Grand Prix Du Salon D'Angouleme. The scenario and compelling style of writing was hailed by the critics and a new dimension to the comic strip was born. Bourgeon only agreed to have his works converted to the computer if the wording and story were scrupulously adhered to; the software writers agreed and attempted to capture the true spirit of his world of make believe.

In the days just before the French revolution, five people (Isa, Dr St Quentin, Mary, Hoel and John) arrived in Africa following an uncomfortable sea journey on a slave ship. Their ultimate aim is to clear Hoel of a wrongful charge of murder and regain the title of Countess for Isa. Unfortunately things do not go well, John goes mad, Hoel falls ill and the two women become exposed to the evil designs of Viaroux and Montague. Love for Hoel spurs Isa on and she quickly decides to travel to Dahomey's kingdom to seek out King Kpengla, there to ask him to help save Hoel . . . and you thought *Eastenders* was complicated.

Most of the screen is taken up with a very attractive graphical representation of what is taking place in the game. Directly below is an information bar; from the left this depicts which character is talking with two vertical bars (zone 1 and zone 2) next to it, used to either choose another character or select available text options; the largest window is for displaying text messages and giving a choice of answers to certain questions asked throughout the game. *Passengers On The Wind II* is played with the cursor, which may be moved anywhere on the screen and a decision on who says what and where taken by clicking the button (joystick or mouse) or pressing the space bar. Should an episode go drastically wrong then the player can restart the game or even load a previously saved one. Action replays of what has transpired in a particular episode (of which there are five) is another thoughtful addition.

The graphics in all versions are very nice indeed, it's a shame the same cannot be said of the gameplay. Clicking around the main picture area trying to discover someone to enter into the character box is tedious, and it would perhaps have been more helpful to begin the game with these people ready to speak, as it were. This would have been much more user-friendly and would help the player get into the game. Once the basic idea has been mastered, the initial interest in 'what will happen next' soon fizzles out as the cursor glides around the screen clicking here there and everywhere trying to establish some sort of story and generally get the adventure going. The graphics in all versions are very nice indeed, it's a shame the same cannot be said of the gameplay. Even when other people and places are discovered the action remains partially dormant and the interaction brain-numbing. Perhaps Infogrames could have released Bourgeon's comics instead, I'm sure they would have been much more interesting.



This guy is obviously inclined to be friendly



Sucking up to the King, French style

PASSENGERS ON THE WIND I

It's flashback time: in case you haven't played it, or would rather pick up straight off with the sequel, here is a brief outline of what happened in 'last week's episode . . . '

The adventure takes place on the eve of the French Revolution in the troubled district of the Triangular Commerce (the slave trade routes between the shores of Brittany, America and Africa). Hoel, a French sailor, flees France when unjustly accused of murder. He is accompanied by Isa, a countess with a taste for adventure who unfortunately has had her title usurped. From ports in Brittany to the African shores they travel through this strange Eighteenth century world on their quest for the truth.

The game begins with Isa and Mary on the shore of a storm tossed sea. Their first task is to smuggle Hoel and John off the semi-wrecked trading ship, the Pontoon, safely into their arms. The style is similar to that of *Passengers On The Wind II*, with the player having to move a cursor around the screen, clicking on whoever and whatever he can to get some sort of response. Its gameplay is about as non-existent as the sequel.

ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.95

AMSTRAD
Diskette: £14.95
Cassette: £9.95

COMMODORE 64
Diskette: £14.95
Cassette: £9.95

PC
Diskette: £19.95

The actual gameplay on all versions is very similar the only real difference being the quality of the graphics and disk access time. Indeed they are enough alike as not to warrant individual ratings.

OVERALL 43%

"The graphics in all versions are very nice indeed, it's a shame the same cannot be said of the gameplay."

THINKING MAN'S CHALLENGE

DIABLO
Diamond Games

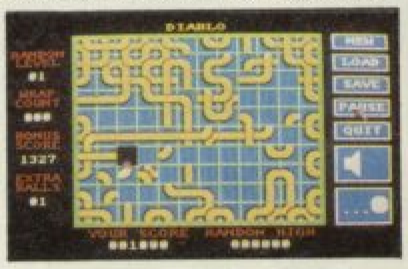
Diamond Games, a German software company marketed in the UK under the **Robtek** banner, point out that *Diablo* is based on a 50-year-old game idea. Now the half-a-century-old concept, by **Manuel Constantinidis**, has been updated to live within the half-a-megabyte machines, with a Commodore version to follow.

In *Diablo* the object is survival. Keep a ball rolling around the playing area until all panels on the screen are removed. The screen is made up of a series of tracks and bridges spread over 119 panels, each of which can be moved and repositioned anywhere in an attempt to form a single, connecting path for the sphere to follow. A life is lost if the ball falls off the end of an incomplete track or hits the edge of the playing area. To complicate things, once a panel has been rolled over, it is removed from play, making it a one-way journey for the ball.

As soon as a number of panels on each screen have been removed, the border turns green and the ball can be made to wrap round to the opposite side of the playing area. Very useful for getting out of tricky corners.

Completing a track gives the player a screen completion bonus (the more panels rearranged, the lower the bonus) and the next level is started. Further levels include a faster rolling sphere and a higher number of planes to be removed before wrap round can occur.

Icons on the title screen perform various functions, including loading a saved game from disk, saving the current game to disk, starting and pausing a game as



Is this screen possible or is it all a pipe dream? Amiga

well as exiting the program. A loudspeaker icon toggles between music and sound effects and a ball icon gives the sphere extra speed.

Diablo is certainly original, although it bears some similarity to Microsphere's highly entertaining Spectrum oldie, *The Train Game*, and more to Incentive's much more interesting *Confuzion*. *Diablo*, however, won't appeal to everyone, unless you like visual puzzles which require thinking several moves ahead. The challenge of playing further screens is lost when you realise they are simply variations of one another. Both ST and Amiga games are virtually identical.

AMIGA
Diskette: £19.95

ATARI ST
Diskette: £14.95

With such a simple idea for a game, at least the graphics and sound effects could have been improved. As they stand, they are very much below average, doing no justice to either the Atari ST or the Amiga at all. An interesting idea poorly executed.

OVERALL 37%

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £7.95
Diskette: £9.95

Not yet released, and we have not seen a preview copy – version update soon.

"*Diablo* **is original, but the challenge is lost when you realise the screens are simply variations of one another."**


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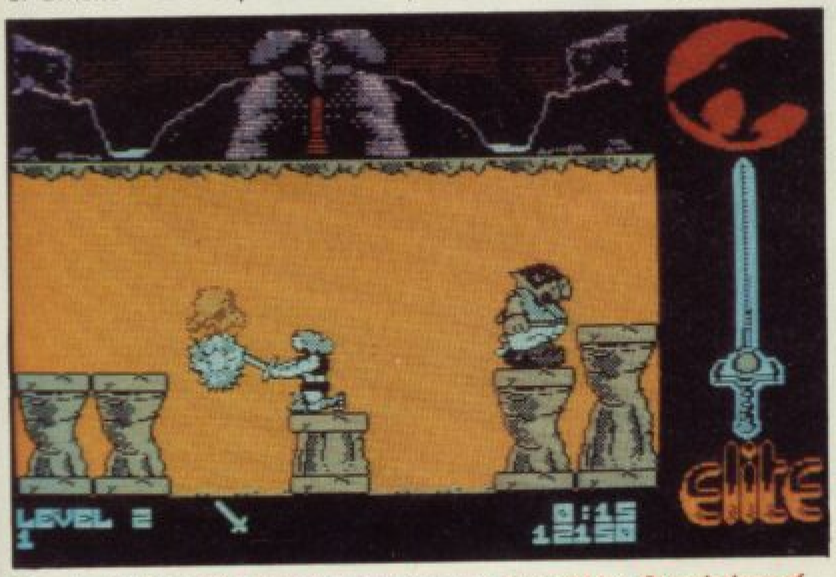
NOT TO BE TAKEN LION DOWN

THUNDERCATS
Elite Systems

For several years **Gargoyle Games** have enjoyed a string of successes such as *Tir Na Nóg* and *Dun Darach*, most notably on the Spectrum and Amstrad, although with their **FTL** label, *Shockway Rider* made its mark with Commodore 64 owners as well. More recently, Gargoyle Games has concentrated on game development – they did *Scooby Doo* for **Elite** – and it was this expertise, as well as the physical proximity of both companies, that **Elite** called upon when they asked Gargoyle to program *Thundercats*, licensed from the well-known TV series. Those familiar with *Tir Na Nóg* and *Dun Darach* may well notice a certain familiarity about the hero of the game, Lion-o . . .

The third Earth is in turmoil. Agents of evil Mumm–ra have entered the Cats Lair and stolen the Eye Of Thundera – a magic jewel that is the power of the sword of Omens – and captured a few journey to castle Plun–dar and retrieve it, or die in the attempt.

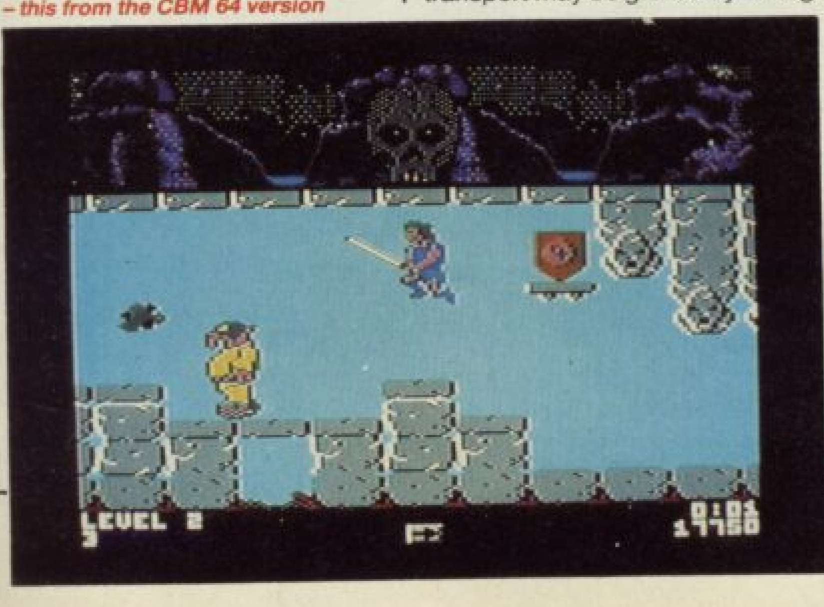
There are 14 levels to fight through in *Thundercats*, including the fertile plain, the caves of the Molemen, the hunting plains and



Crouched in the centre despatching a monster, doesn't Lion-O remind you of Cuchulainn? Amstrad CPC screen

Thundercats while they were about it. Mumm–ra's agents succeeded in incarcerating Wilykit, Panthro and Tygra but the others managed to escape. The Eye Of Thundera was given to Lion–O for his safe-keeping, and he now vows to return it to its rightful place. To do this he must

Thunder Cats is an excellent job across all the popular 8-bit machines – this from the CBM 64 version



eventually the final battle. Each level is a horizontally scrolling hive of action with Lion–o as the central character running, jumping from ledge to ledge and either swinging his sword or firing energy bolts to dispose of the enemy. Hordes of Molemen and other mutated life-forms attack from all directions; one touch is all it takes to end a life, although extra lives, weapons or transport may be gained by hitting containers which are situated throughout.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Levels three, eight and 13 are rescue missions where lives are not lost, but the player has only one attempt to free his fellow cat before moving on to the following scenario. A time limit operates for each non-rescue level, and should the player go over it Mumm–ra himself enters the fray and Lion–O meets a swift demise. The elemental levels from four to seven (Fire, Water, Air and Earth) are slightly different from the others in that the player is allowed to choose in which order he wishes to enter them.

Thundercats features fast, smooth parallax scrolling which is very effective. The top of screen is decorated with a nicely digitised picture just below which is a slower scrolling atmospheric backdrop (trees or rocks depending on the current location) with the main action taking place below that. Gargoyle Games have worked hard on each version so that Lion-O runs and jumps in a quite realistic way, hair flowing, arms pumping and with a general air of meaning it. *Thundercats* may not be totally original in its implementation, but the attention to detail, gameplay and addictiveness associated with previous Gargoyle games that are all present, make it a great game to play. If your joystick dexterity is up to it, then Third Earth should soon be free and Mumm–ra sent packing.

COMMODORE 64
Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

Thundercats **is compelling. Each level completed is a victory and each new one a challenge that just has to be bested. The 64 version has beautiful animation and very smooth scrolling. Control of Lion-O is perhaps a little frustrating sometimes, but once the basics have been mastered you can usually get out of most tricky situations. Then there's the music; the sound throughout is very good but** Rob Hubbard's **music is outstanding, adding a great deal to the overall effect of the game.**

OVERALL 86%

AMSTRAD
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95

The digitised graphics in the Amstrad adaption are probably the best of all the versions, although it's a pity the 464 Thundercats **is limited to only one digitised picture. The game graphics are nicely done, varied and smooth, keeping faith with the cartoon.** Rob Hubbard's **'feline' soundtrack is excellent and works well. This is a polished, playable and exciting release from** Elite.

OVERALL 87%

SPECTRUM 48/128/+3
Cassette: £7.95
Diskette: £14.95

The 48K sound is admittedly a bit thin, you need a 128 to appreciate the effects and music. Gargoyle**'s experience with parallax scrolling on earlier Spectrum games pays dividends, and using colour planes neatly avoids what otherwise would have been a very monochromatic appearance. This is probably the fastest version of what is a highly addictive game.**

OVERALL 90%

ATARI ST
Diskette: £14.95

The ST version of Thundercats **is imminent, and given that the game itself remains as well constructed as we have seen on the 8-bit machines, there's no doubting that it should be an excellent buy.**

NINTENDO

Elite **are promising a Nintendo cartridge shortly. It's still early days in this market, not many games have been converted from home computer format to games console yet. So this should be an interesting experiment to watch. Clearly, though, the game's design is ideal for cartridge, and we may expect something quite spect-acular.**

" . . . attention to detail, gameplay and addictiveness make it a great game . . . an exciting release from Elite **. . . "**

PRESS ANY KEY

EARLY MANKIND (EARLY WOMAN EVEN KINDER)

SAPIENS
Loriciels

Founded in 1983, Loriciels quickly rose to the forefront of French software companies with over 200,000 sales by 1984. They started their own in-house advertising agency, and then founded **Microids** to concentrate on micro and domestic robots and design software for home computers. Today Loriciels is the number one publisher in France and has become one of the three largest distributors. They have recently approached **Elite Systems** to help with their latest project, Loriciels UK.

Sapiens (one of the first Loriciels/Elite releases) is a real-time graphic adventure style game with over three million locations; this vast number is achieved via the utilisation of 'algorithms of fractal vision in perspective' (. . . that's what we thought too). Designed and written by **Didier** and **Olivier Guillion**, it is set in Southwestern Europe some ten thousand years ago when man lived or died by his hunting prowess, and is presented on screen as an upper area for displaying graphics and option/action menus below. The main neanderthal (he can either be played as Torgan or as an original character created by the player) faces setting off into the wilderness in search of food for his starving tribe and becoming a great hunter in the process.

Interaction with other inhabitants is integral, as they may be bearers of useful information or items which Torgan needs – a major achievement in the game is to actually get another character to join Torgan on his quest for food and glory.

INTERACTION

To perform the many actions available, select the option required from the appropriate main menu; a corresponding sub–menu then appears. For example, choosing SAY creates a sub-menu of usable phrases, such as 'Who are you?', 'I can control the lightning' (a particularly frightening statement) and 'Good hunting'.

LOOK's sub-menu offers landscape choices: lateral view, panorama and map. Landscape and panorama depict the same kind of picture but the latter slowly rotates to show the whole surrounding. The lateral view displays Torgan's view with anything or anybody in the vicinity; in this mode most interaction scenes take place. Should Torgan upset any tribe members who happen to be nearby, then they casually stroll over and cut him to shreds (very pretty on the ST version). The map, which may be zoomed into or out of, gives a better idea of exactly where Torgan is within the game's boundaries.

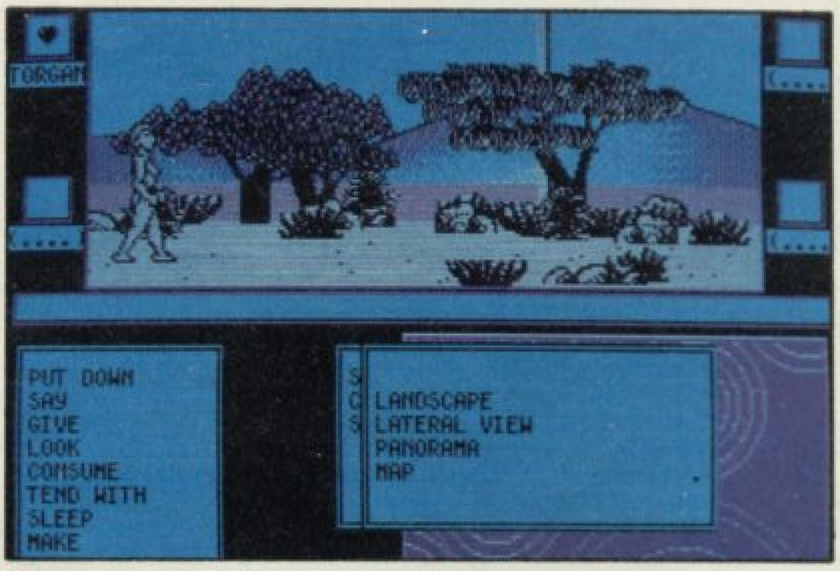
MAKE is an interesting option as it allows the player to hack away at pieces of flint to create an axe or spear blade. This computerised attempt at DIY is graphically portrayed with the ideal shape of the weapon shown in a green dotted line, the player points the cursor to where he requires his flint to be cut and hacks away; but be warned, great care is needed not to chip too much away or the stone will break apart and leave Torgan weaponless.

ORIGINAL

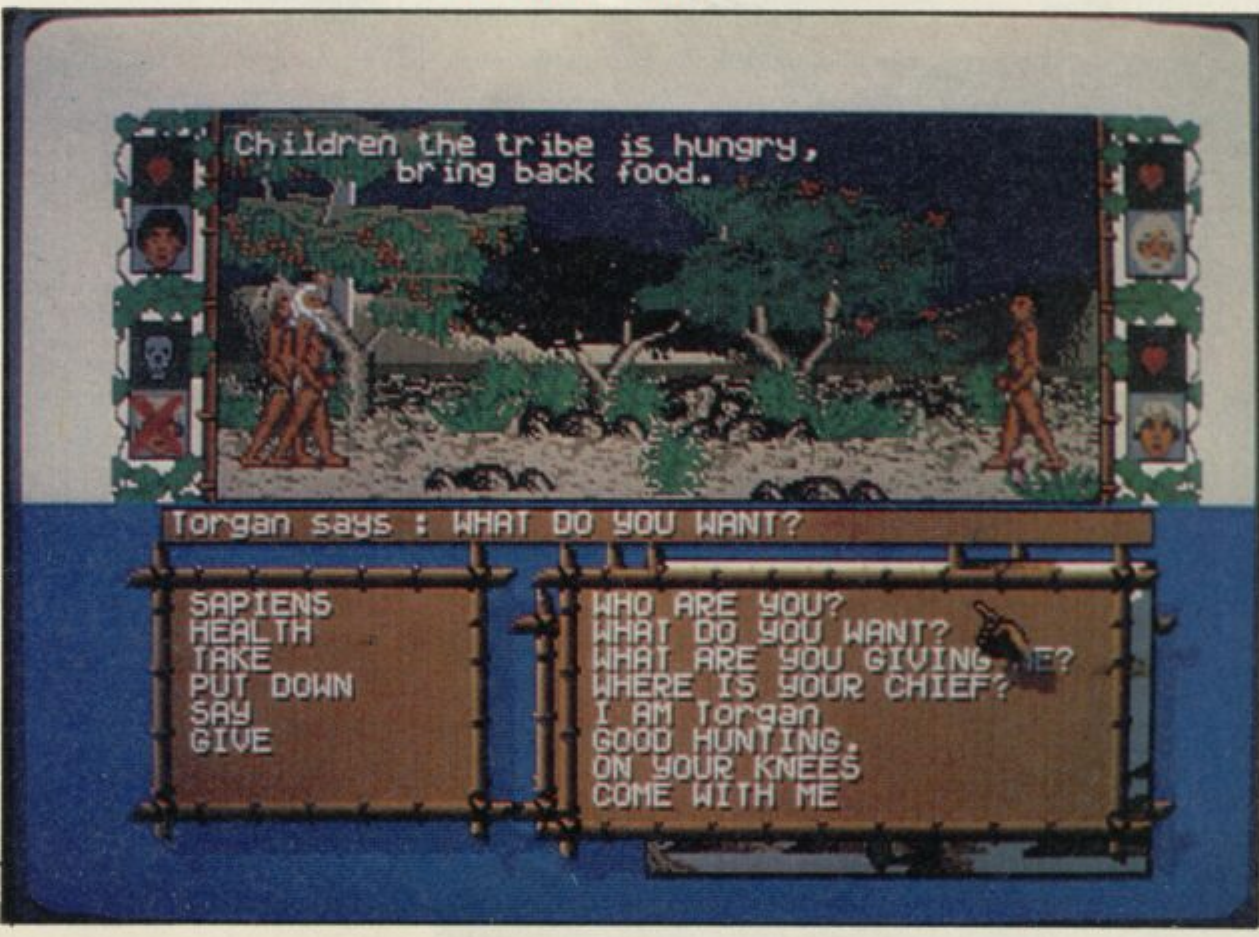
Travel across the terrain is regularly interrupted by the appearance of other neanderthals with whom he may converse and trade, or even wildlife such as rabbits which he may befriend or kill depending on how hungry he is. Each area Torgan finds himself in should be thoroughly searched as it may contain flints for weapons or berries for healing potions and, very importantly, water to drink. Items may be added to the inventory with the TAKE command and traded via the GIVE option.

Sapiens is interesting and certainly quite original in both plot and implementation. The graphics on both versions examined (Atari ST and PC) are very effective and polished and the game itself quite

Our hero looking a little bushed



Torgan greets a member of another tribe, an attractive screen from Sapiens on the Atari ST



easy to get into. Frustration can set in when conversation with other game inhabitants is quickly reduced to a hail of abuse and eventual bloodshed when you do not know precisely what it is they want. It is easy enough, when a tribesmen decides to teach Torgan a lesson for his aggressive manner, to spend game-days recovering from the attack – but isn't that life?

There is certainly a lot to do in *Sapiens* and it looks very pretty whilst doing it but it is quite repetitive and its interest factor may dwindle quite quickly.

ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.99

The music in Sapiens **is very Depeche Mode (an appropriately neanderthal band) and surprisingly adds quite a bit to the games atmosphere. All the graphical scenes are impressive, although the character animation is somewhat halting. Perhaps a little more control over Torgan's actions would have been nice, walk left or right, stoop down and hit (with his axe) or throw a spear do not seem quite enough considering the task ahead of him.**

OVERALL 64%

PC
Diskette: £24.99

It plays the same as the Atari version except that the keyboard is used rather more than the mouse. The colours are pastelly and unreal (PC 1640 SD – although if you have the colour graphics board, this may not be quite the case) and the sound is awful, more a fault of the machine than the game. Having said all that Sapiens **is still very playable on the PC compatibles.**

OVERALL 62%

AMSTRAD CPC
£14.99
Available mid-January

"Sapiens **is interesting and certainly quite original in both plot and implementation."**

A HOWLING SUCCESS?

WEREWOLVES OF LONDON

Viz Designs

Viz Designs is not a development team (which it may sound like), but another offshoot in the growing list of **Ariolasoft** labels. This is their first game and it is out first for the Amstrad, with other 8-bit versions to follow shortly.

COMMODORE 64
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £12.99

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £8.99

The other 8-bit versions are in the pipeline, and should be available before Christmas. The Commodore version should be no problem, but the Spectrum will depend a lot on how the graphics are implemented.



For reasons unknown to you (and why not?) a wicked family of Sloane Rangers have placed a curse on you (the whimsy becomes more sublime) – a curse that causes you to transform into a werewolf every full moon! Seeking revenge for this dastardly deed, you intend to search London for the family members and 'dispose' of them, one by one. It may sound like a rather gruesome scenario, but in fact *Werewolves Of London* is a nicely constructed, humorous and pleasant release from Viz Designs.

To realise your inhuman passion, you can run across rooftops, prowl through parks, stroll along streets, scamper down sewers and even use the Underground (a description of abilities that could describe almost any Londoner in fact). Should you chance upon a Sloane, a cross flashes in the status display, the moment at which you should quickly run up and kill him or her before they scamper off.

The city constabulary disapproves of your actions however, and unlike those silly policemen in the movies with their prejudices about common superstition, this lot is just waiting to fire silver bullets at anything remotely hairy. Being shot by a silver bullet, falling off rooftops or electrocuting yourself on the Underground rails causes a loss of blood, and losing all of it ends your hunt. Pouncing on Londoners restores blood, although you have to catch your meal first.

As soon as daylight breaks, you naturally turn back into a respectable, innocent human. This provides an ideal opportunity to explore the city and collect such useful objects as crowbars (to open the manholes leading to the sewers) and flashlights (useful for dark passages and the tunnels of the Underground). Bandages also come in handy for stemming the flow of blood.

The police won't tolerate all this mayhem, and getting nicked means a night in jug with any illegal possessions being put back where they came from.

Only when all eight of the Sloane Ranger family are killed, can the werewolf curse be lifted, and London made safe again – until the next game.

AMSTRAD
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

Oddly, there's something very pleasing about running around, eating passers-by and dodging the bobbies. The game uses the basic elements of an arcade adventure, coupled with over a 100 screens, and combines them to good effect. The action can slow down quite a bit when there's a lot of people on screen, but eating them soon solves that problem! The graphics are relatively simple considering what the Amstrad is capable of, but they work well; the way the lycanthrope lopes along is especially convincing.

OVERALL 75%

"Werewolves Of London **is a nicely constructed, humorous and pleasant release from Viz Designs."**

THE CHIEF WHIP

INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM

US Gold

The hero is back! Licensed from the Spielberg/Lucas film of the same name via the Atari coin-op machine version of the same name, Indiana Jones is on a rescue mission to recover the lost Sankara stones from the malevolent Thuggee cult. **US Gold** have employed an army of programmers for the popular machines – **Tiertex** (who did *Ace Of Aces* and *720°*, also reviewed this issue) were responsible for the Spectrum and CBM64, while **Paragon** did the Amstrad and Atari ST versions. For what we are about to receive, may the cooks be truly responsible . . .

Indy's off to recover the stolen Sankara stone and rescue the Indian villagers' children who have been enslaved beneath Pankot Palace, secret worshipping ground of the Thuggee Death Cult. There they are forced to dig in the mines for precious gems and the other missing Sankara stones.

The game is split into three distinct levels. Indy's first task is to rescue the children, which involves travelling through a series of caverns, tunnels, ladders, chutes and conveyor belts to discover the whereabouts of each child. The labyrinth of pathways are patrolled by Thugs and infested by venomous snakes which can give a fatal nip if they get too close.

WHIPPING UP A STORM

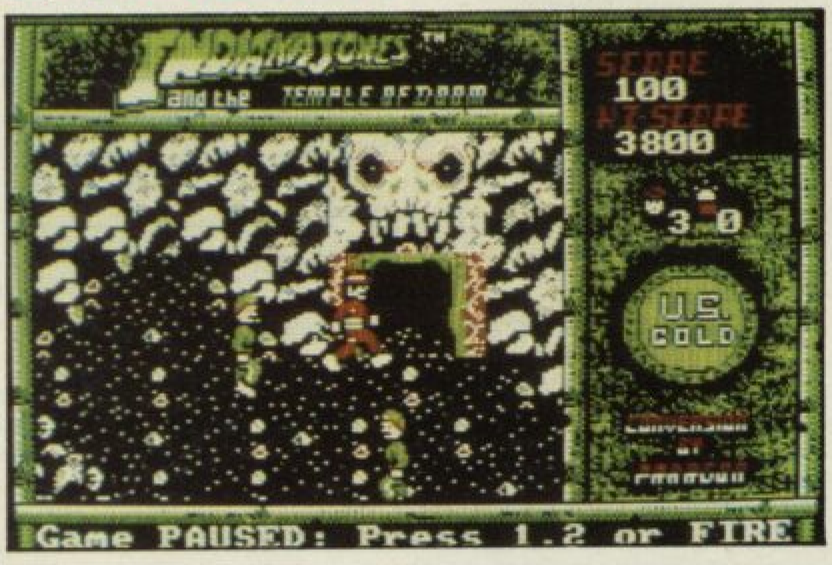
The odds aren't entirely stacked against Indiana because, as always, he's armed with his trusty whip. Zapping Thugs with it renders them helpless for a short time, while whipping the snakes dispenses with their disservices permanently. The children are hidden inside tiny cells, and to free them Indy can whip open the cell doors. When all the children have been freed, it's on to the second level.

This features a death-defying race in mine cars along the rail network inside the confined space of the tunnels. The player controls the car containing Indiana Jones, and must safeguard against derailments as well as watching out for jumps and missing sections of rail. The route to freedom is guarded by Thugs and a Thug giant all intent on stopping Indy's progress.

The final level takes place within the Temple Of Doom itself. Here the Sankara stone must be recovered from beneath the statue of Kali, the four-armed goddess of death. To achieve this Indy must avoid pursuing guards and other nasties. Clever manoeuvring and a maelström of skillful whipping are essential to get through this screen. The action continues until all three Sankara stones have been recovered, when Indiana is then faced with a perilous rope bridge to get across.

Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom suffers from several problems, some associated with individual machine restrictions, but in general it seems to be an indifferent implementation of a great action film. The coin-op itself, though pretty to look at, wasn't much above average in gameplay, and it must be a point that in converting a less than perfect source, which must be accurately copied, the designers and programmers are seriously restricted. The game's stages are obviously based on the film, but poor game design lets them down tremendously; the Thug guards, for instance, regularly appear out of thin air to attack, giving you no chance at all to retaliate (they are fairest in Spectrum version). And then, rescuing the captured kids seems too easy and doesn't take very long.

The graphics might be neat – if you could see them. The Amstrad version certainly has the most cluttered looking



AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

Temple Of Doom **has some atmospheric, but bland graphics, which unfortunately don't work - due to the colour scheme, it is difficult to see where the edges of ledges are until it's too late. Also unfair are the guards who are faster than Indy on the ladders, and the scrolling screen is just too small to avoid them with any success. What soundtrack there is is horrendous, adding nothing to the game.**

OVERALL 42%

COMMODORE 64
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

Indy marches around level one though the Ark had some terrible lasting effect on his gait – and his weapon-wielding seems decidedly dodgy. Racing through tunnels, steering the car whilst fighting off Thugs is a sensation which is sadly lacking, the little mobile cruises through the screen at about the pace of a 1541 disk drive. Not a high quality game graphically, the thing creates sufficient frustration to warrant turning the computer off and loading something else . . . quickly.

OVERALL 32%

ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.99

After three less than inspiring Dooms**, hopes were high for the ST. What a let down; the play area of section one is larger than in the 8-bit versions and the backdrop and characters are thankfully much more detailed, but Indy still walks like a clockwork doll. Whip accuracy is a touch better and the Thugs give more of chance to fight back. However the scrolling is very poor (the main character has to reach the end of the screen before it scrolls which means that some adversaries are not seen until the last minute) and the speed of the game is painfully slow. Overall, with the option of playing a hard, medium or slow game, the ST** Indiana Jones **is better than the 8-bit versions but not to the extent that perhaps it could have been.**

OVERALL 56%

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £8.99

Tiertex **sensibly opted for monochrome graphics, which actually means it comes off best in many ways, avoiding the cluttered impression prevalent in other versions. However, they move jerkily and bear little resemblance to the characters they are based on. It's also annoying, when you've let the tape steam to the end, that the instructions neglect to tell you that this is a multiload game. A lack of definable control keys is a definite drawback, and another frustration is the whip, which doesn't work as fast as the player would want it to. Nevertheless,** Indiana Jones **can be enjoyable, but you are unlikely to keep returning.**

OVERALL 64%

" . . . an indifferent implementation of a great action film and a less than perfect coin-op . . . "

A PLUNGE IN THE GUNGE

THROUGH THE TRAPDOOR

Piranha

Don Priestley's been writing computer games for longer than he might care to think about, way back to early Spectrum days and games like *Maziacs*. Most were released through **Dk'tronics**, and the last he did for them before the company turned away from software, marked a new style characterised by giant, colourful figures with plenty of animation, *Popeye*. After a first release, the then newly-formed Macmillan software house **Piranha** picked up the game, and so started a fruitful partnership which has seen Don follow up with *Trapdoor*, *Flunky*, and now the sequel *Through The Trapdoor*.

The highly successful *Trapdoor* was based upon the cult TV show featuring plasticine monsters. The sequel also features the flubbery antics of gigacute blue Berk, and provides much more action than Don's last offering, *Flunky*, but still retains an irresistable charm that makes it a winner.

Deep down below the trapdoor is a place where you don't go alone . . . Unless, of course, you're as stupid as Boni the Skull. But to be fair, he is helped. There he is, quite content sitting above the trapdoor, when it bursts open and out flies a hideous bird-like creature who grabs Boni by the crainium and disappears down below with him. This slight mishap hails the return of Berk and his worm-gobbling chum Drutt. Thus begins the new adventure – *Trapdoor II: The Search For Boni*.

The game takes place in the strange lands, split into four regions, below the trapdoor. Boni remains captive at the farthest end of the fourth region and to get there Berk and Drutt must collect three keys which unlock the doors between the regions.

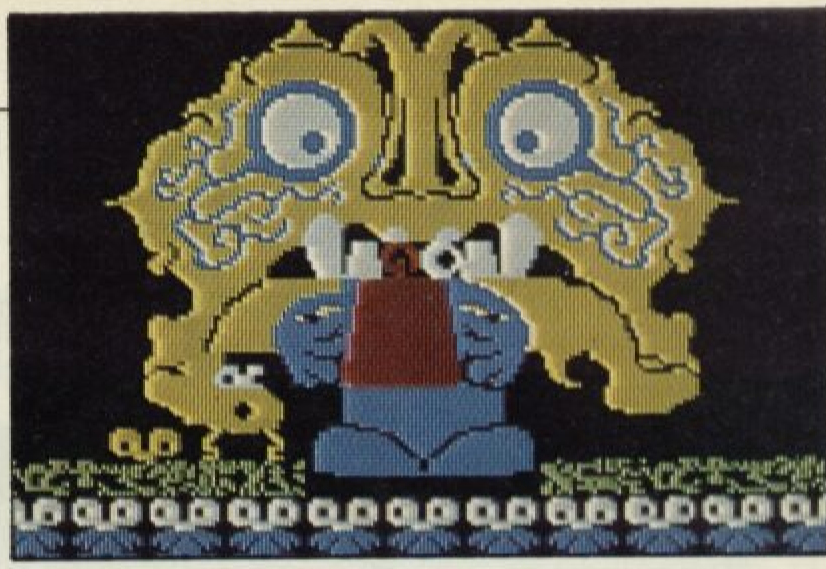
Through The Trapdoor relies much more on action and timing than puzzles for its main appeal – where puzzles are encountered they aren't as involved as those in either *Trapdoor* or *Flunky*. While it appears most people still love Don Priestley's graphic style the task-orientated games are wearing a bit thin. At first the game proves difficult, and it may seem as though you're getting nowhere until you discover one little secret that helps to complete a section a gives a clue to the nature of the difficulties ahead.

DIGESTING HELP

Unlike the original, where Berk was the only controllable character, in *Through The Trapdoor* you can operate both Berk and Drutt, utilising each creatures' unique abilities. Drutt, for example, can jump very high and bears a charmed life when it comes to meeting any of the monsters that inhabit the tunnels; Berk's far too fat to jump, but he can carry objects, and his hyperactive digestive system has some odd, though useful, effects on the things he eats. Working the characters in unison, it's relatively easy to complete most puzzles.

Controlling Berk is simple – just left and right – although eating sweets and magic mushrooms provides him with jumping and flying powers. Drutt, on the other hand, is rather more independently minded and when not actually being moved in a direction tends to wander off and begin chasing, and later eating, the worms which wriggle around in the corridors. In fact Berk's carrying ability comes in useful at times for imprisoning Drutt within his capacious arms.

Control between the characters is switched by depressing the fire button, and to indicate which character is currently in control, a row of little bulging-eyed blue Berks or yellow Drutts appears along the bottom of the screen. As the game progresses the eyes gradually close – when they are all closed your time is up, and Berk and Drutt are zapped.



A splendid moment of genuine terror – Berk and Drutt almost meet their maker – Spectrum screen

AMSTRAD CPC

Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £13.95
Mid November

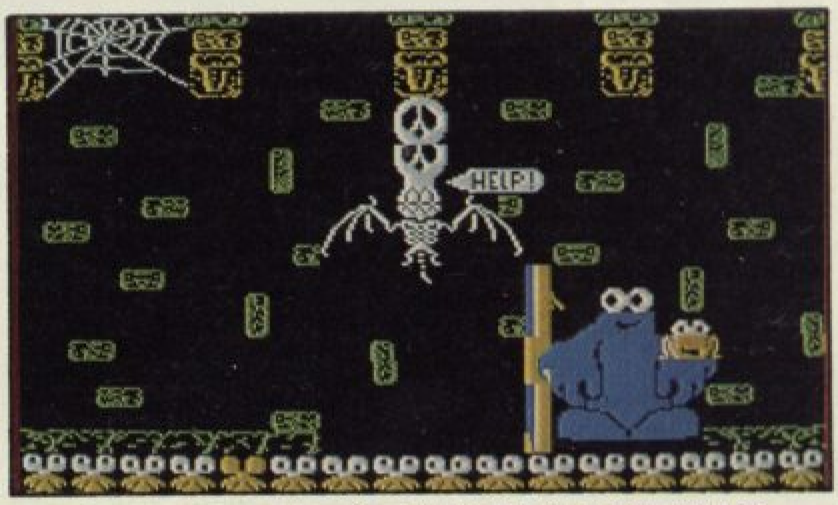
Previous Priestley offerings have been converted very well by Five Ways Software and been well received critically; Through The Trapdoor **should be no excption. Obviously the graphics will be blockier for the CPC version to make full use of Mode 0's 16 colours, but this shouldn't affect gameplay. As with the Commodore 64 version, a title tune and more sound effects should be included.**

SPECTRUM 48/128

Cassette: £8.95

Don Priestley has always been a committed Spectrum programmer, so clearly Through The Trapdoor **is crafted with the machine very much in mind. The large cartoonesque characters are engaging and by capitalising on sheer size, he has provided some very startling shocks here and there. The sound is little more than 'bells and whistles', which is slightly disappointing but it hardly detracts from the overall pleasure. It's a fascinating game both to play and watch, and with the inclusion of two characters to control, provides enough entertainment to make it an excellent sequel.**

OVERALL 82%



Don Priestley's large graphics shown to good effect, as Berk cuddles Drutt, who otherwise might wander off on his own – 'watch the birdie . . .' – Spectrum screen

COMMODORE 64

Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £13.95
Late November

Games devised for the Spectrum haven't always gone down well with Commodore owners. Happily, Don Priestley's big figure games have. Using character graphics, the 64 version will virtually mirror its Spectrum counterpart. Gameplay will remain the same and the speed should be fine. Add to that a theme tune and you've got a version that could possibly better the Spectrum.

OTHER FORMATS

Piranha have no plans for Through The Trapdoor **on any other machines.**

> "Through The Trapdoor **has the mixture just right . . . an irresistable charm makes it a winner."**

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ROB STEEL'S GETTING ADVENTUROUS

Welcome the the first of a series of regular adventure sections in THE GAMES MACHINE. I, Rob Steel, find myself in the enviable position of having eight different computers at my disposal on which to play and review adventures. This should mean that even if the adventure market for a particular machine gets a little thin at times, these columns will not suffer from a lack of material to peruse.

This bi–month I look at Level 9's Gnome Ranger, **two very different Infocom titles and the game of Jeffery Archer's first book** Not A Penny More Not A Penny Less **from the unlikely adventure source of Domark.**

NOT A PENNY MORE NOT A PENNY LESS

Domark

ATARI ST Diskette: £19.95
SPECTRUM 48/128 Cassette: £14.95
AMSTRAD Cassette: £14.95, Disk: £19.95
COMMODORE 64 Cassette: £14.95, Diskette: £19.95
BBC Cassette :£14.95, Diskette £19.95

Jeffrey Archer is the author of six bestselling novels to date, including *A Quiver Full Of Arrows*, *Shall We Tell The President* and *Kane And Abel*. Born in 1940 Archer was educated at Brasenose College, Oxford and became the youngest member of the House of Commons when he won the by–election at Louth in 1969. *Not A Penny More Not A Penny Less* was his first novel, published in 1974, it was an instant success – just as well as it was written to make him a lot of money to recover from a huge loss he had taken after being conned in a manner very similar to that in the story itself.

If all this makes Jeffrey sound like a computer wizkid as well, then just read Mel Croucher's piece on page 21 – in fact the game scenario was written by **Robin Waterfield** (who has also written a role-playing game based on the story for this issue of THE GAMES MACHINE – see page 97), and the programming was taken care of by **Imagitec Design**.

Not A Penny More Not A Penny Less, the computer game, puts the player right in the middle of the action. Taking the role of Stephen Bradley, the game opens in his office with the knowledge that he has just been swindled out of $200,000. Left virtually penniless by the collapse of the company Stephen worked for (caused by the unscrupulous owner Metcalfe), Bradley, aided by other victims of this evil man, aims to get his money back – to the penny.

Unfortunately the forces of law and order have no proof that Metcalfe carried out this dastardly deed and can therefore be of no assistance, the four victims are on their own. They decide to use Metcalfe's own modus operandi, and Stephen must now attempt to control his vengeful comrades as they each carry out the sting using their own methods.

I played the ST version, visually it looked quite professional, set out as a piece of paper with the graphics resembling a black-and-white photograph which slides to the top of the page and is clipped into position. Below this are the very brief descriptions of where Stephen currently is and what he can see. A single line is reserved for text input at the bottom of the page. The basic aim of the game is to fill Stephen's folder with information about Metcalfe and his other three victims and then use it to gain revenge.

The voice of Jeffrey himself vibrates out of the monitor at the very beginning of the game and orally describes certain situations throughout the 'adventure', although both the graphics and sound may be switched off to speed gameplay up. Text input may be edited via the cursor and delete keys. The size of the text may be selected as 40 or 80 column depending on how good your eyesight is.

Although most of the usual adventuring words can be used in *Not A Penny More Not A Penny Less*, the way they are implemented is somewhat frustrating. For example, all puzzles in every location must be solved before the player can move on to another place. Movement itself is sometimes achieved in an unconventional way, the game *does* include the usual compass directions (though not in abbreviated form and only when the game specifies the availability of these exits), but to visit certain people one must input EXAMINE (persons name) – very odd. I did find that in the first location I could type EXAMINE ROBIN and the game would reply OK, but I was still in Stephen's office.

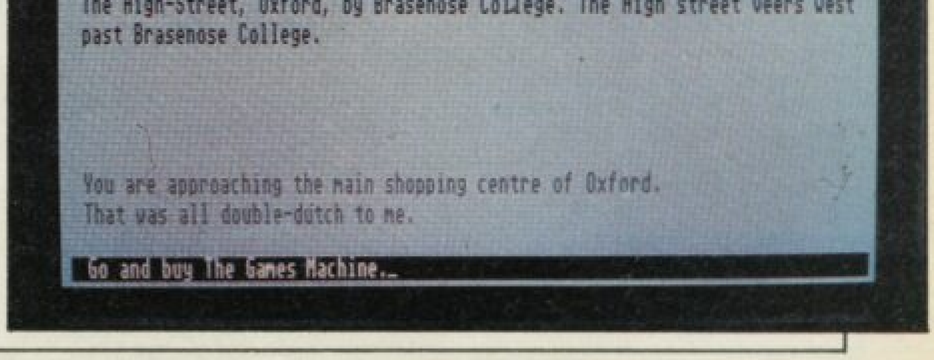
The parser expects precise input, typing EXAMINE LIST is no good if you want to study the telephone numbers list, it has to be EXAMINE TELEPHONE NUMBERS. There are other annoying little glitches within the program such as when the cupboard has been opened and the magazine therein read, the screen changes to the show the folder and its contents, and when it returns to the location description the inventory of the cupboard has disappeared. If the player has forgotten what was in there the rigmarole of closing the cupboard and opening it again has to be performed.

Once the game's idiosyncrasies have been learned the actual depth of play is revealed – it doesn't take long. Overall I would say the computer game is no match for the book (which incidentally is supplied as part of the packaging) and is certainly very frustrating to play. But it is by no means a terrible program and definitely worthy of some perseverance.

All versions of the game except BBC and Spectrum have both speech and graphics.

ATMOSPHERE 62%
INTERACTION 51%
OVERALL 59%

Metcalfe on his way to ruin – Atari ST screen



GNOME RANGER

Level 9
AMIGA Diskette: £14.95
ATARI ST Diskette: £14.95
COMMODORE 64 Diskette: £9.95, Cassette: £9.95
AMSTRAD CPC Diskette: £9.95, Cassette: £9.95
ATARI XE, 800XL Diskette: £9.95, Cassette: £9.95
MSX 64K £9.95
SPECTRUM Cassette: £9.95

Level 9 is one of the original UK games houses, remaining an independent partnership for many years, it has produced some 15 adventures in all. Through the years their products have become more and more sophisticated progressing from the verb/noun input to the modern versatile parsers. The size of the games has greatly increased as has their complexity, now they include multi–player puzzles, RAM save/restore, Undo and digitised graphics. But are the story lines any better? The Level 9 greats such as *Snowball*, *Adventure Quest* and *Lords Of Time* are hard acts to follow, regardless of the advanced writing utilities used nowadays (*Kaos* is the preferred Austin tool at present) and sometime one gets the feeling that these prestigious games will never be bested.

Gnome Ranger, their latest offering, is actually released on their own label again, rather than through Rainbird. Using all the adventure writing skills and technology the Austins have mastered over the years, is this the quest to end all quests?

The story concerns a gnome by the name of Ingrid Bottomlow who has got to find her way back home after being accidentally teleported to a strange and wonderful land. Set in three parts, it includes all the hi–tech features mentioned earlier; go to, follow, run to, find, RAM save/restore, undo (not on the Spectrum 48K version), digitised pictures on the Amiga, Atari ST, IMB PC, CBM 64 and Amstrad diskettes and an auto-play feature for demo purposes is included in the ST version.



Gnome, gnome on the range . . . Atari ST screen

ADVANCE PARSER

The parser in all cases is very advanced with the capability of accepting intricate input. There are other characters within the game which Ingrid may come across on her travels who can be recruited and given fairly complex orders to carry out, for example, 'Nymph, go to Llama and get the flower then find me and give the flower to me.' Impressive isn't it?

The digitised pictures are very pretty with the ones on the Commodore 64 being the most impressive, given that it is only an 8-bit machine. *Gnome Ranger* is immediately playable, consisting of no sudden deaths and a huge area to explore. Interaction with the game is quite easy as it displays any words it doesn't understand and is quite lenient as to how certain actions required may be phrased.

LIKE A LEMMING TO LEBLING

. . . Or as a lamb to the slaughter, star-struck cub-reporter Nik Wild took a rare opportunity provided by the Personal Computer World Show to chat with one of the greats of American adventure games, INFOCOM's David Lebling. Co-author of *Zork* and author of *Sorcerer*, *Spellbreaker* and many more great adventures, Lebling spoke with grave frankness. But first, there was the adventure of reaching him in his eyrie . . .

When I heard that David Lebling was to be available for interview at the PCWShow, I jumped at the chance of meeting him. Brandishing my weapon in one hand and shield in the other (pen and paper to you), I left the relative safety of Newsfield's fortress on Olympius to join my quest in search of this member of the high priesthood of adventure authors.

Charged with the task of bringing home a few words of wisdom from the esteemed shaman, the very thought of such a meeting gave me the strength I needed to face the terrors which lay before me. Would I survive the human tidal wave which pushed against my endeavours and successfully reach the Guardian Of The Stairs where all my stealth would be needed to pass, or else suffer banishment to the the Side Exit?

Once on Level One, had I the willpower to pass the Siren (Lesley of **Electronic Arts** who seemed to guard all stands) without falling into her deadly arms? (No! Between you and me). And could I challenge the Out-Run ogre while still having sufficient time left in the day to question the master? As the Tower Of Activision loomed into view, I realised that the toughest part of my task was yet to come – the interview!

Suddenly there he was, Dave Lebling, author of Infocom adventures, standing not ten feet away. Staring at my identification medallion he smiled, and we exchanged greetings. He led me to his inner sanctum. Reclining on the silken cushions of Electric Dreams amid the bustling of many fair maidens and musclebound eunuchs, and with the friendly sounds of 8-bit playing in the background, the conversing commenced.

"A bunch of us guys from MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) thought ourselves so intelligent that the world would be our oyster."

MONOSYLLABIC

Full of trepidation and finding it hard to concentrate being this near to one so great, I'm afraid I asked the obvious: 'How did Infocom come about,' I squeaked.

Looking at me with a polite expression he spoke, his strange accent adding to the power of his words: 'A bunch of us guys from MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) thought ourselves so intelligent that the world would be our oyster. Setting up a computer program orientated company seemed inevitable, and development of a business package called *Cornerstone* and an adventure utility named *Zil* (don't ask!) began.

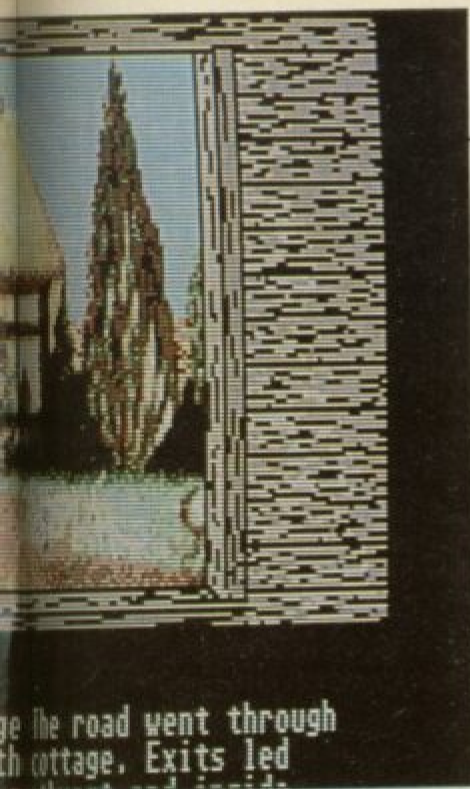
'Unfortunately our first real taste of the big bad outside world came when *Cornerstone* flopped and we had to concentrate on the games market if we were to survive.'

Pause for thought and to let Clare Hirsch (an Activision siren) squeeze past. I was now really getting into this question and answers game and thought the next inquiry should be a real humdinger, soul-searching and revealing. 'How many writers do you have at Infocom?' asked I.

'Six.'

'. . . and do you all work in the same office?'

'No.'



UNHUMAN

Having said all this I'm not sure I like running all over the place, true it may be more lifelike but it smacks of gimmickry and doesn't add anything to the game except speed of play. Commands such as FOLLOW and WAIT FOR are useful, as is the way other characters may be ordered about, but there seems to be something missing. Perhaps it's the plot, it is so far out of context with reality that it cannot possibly be believed and therefore fails to inspire the feeling of being involved. I realise that many adventures are 'unreal' yet they at least either maintain some sort of human element or a semblance of reality via the game style. *Gnome Ranger* is defunct of humans and because every word that normally starts with 'N' is substituted by one spelled with a 'GN' (NORTH becomes GNORTH and so on) reality is lost; the Llama doesn't help the case either.

Escapism is fine as long as there is a thin strand included in it which will lead the player back to reality or at least remind him that it not too far away. From a personal point of view *Gnome Ranger* is very well implemented, but getting through it became nothing less than an arduous task. Eventually I could care less about the fate of Ingrid and indeed it was not too long before the digitised pictures faded to a blank screen.

Level 9 began their downhill slide with *Worm In Paradise* and have not yet produced a game good enough to drag them back up to the good old verb/noun days. I have added a Lastability rating to this review, a one-off as I feel it is important.

ATMOSPHERE 57%
INTERACTION 72%
LASTABILITY 19%
OVERALL 49%

SPACE QUEST

Sierra
AMIGA Diskette: £24.99
ATARI ST Diskette: £29.99

The system of planets known as Earnon has a dying sun, food is becoming scarce in the increasingly cold climate and the populace is incapable of doing anything about it. Help in the form of the scientific community of Xenon, which is developing a Star Generator, is their only hope and the plan is to convert one of the system's lifeless planets into a new sun. Spacelab Arcada is sent to the outer edges of Earnon to attempt the still experimental task, reporting to base frequently on developments and progress. Unfortunately these transmissions are picked up by the Sariens, a race of particularly nasty space pirates, who decide that the Star Generator would be a good weapon to have, and so, aboard their powerful battle cruiser Deltaur, they attack.

The adventure opens with the player in the role of a lowly apprentice sanitation engineer, who, due to his attempts at taking a quick nap in a convenient storage closet, is not discovered by the attackers as they rape and pillage. He waits quietly until the commotion has died down and eventually plucks up the courage to venture out into the corridor. The sight that greets his eyes is not a pleasant one, dead crew members litter the floor and damaged equipment smoulders quietly in a haze of blue smoke. For a man with little brain he very quickly decides that he must escape the captured vessel and somehow render the Star Generator inoperative before the dastardly Sariens can use it.

Most of the screen in *Space Quest* is taken up by the animated, cartoon-style graphic portrayal of the adventure with a small area beneath for text input. Any relevant messages are shown in windows overlaying the main display with a help screen and inventory table available. Control of the main character's movement

PRESS ANY KEY

Looking heavenward I prayed. Please, not another one-word answer. But the gods were with me it seemed, for he continued: 'We have a large open-plan affair with smaller offices leading off. The central area is a very useful place to be if you want to learn the innermost secrets of forthcoming games.' Aiming to be professional, I adopted a puzzled look designed to coax him on. It worked: 'Here any puzzles and their solutions are inadvertantly given away,' he went on, 'as the writers, excited and pleased by their work, come screaming out of their office and, well, BRAG!'

'Does this not give you an unfair advantage when playtesting their games?'

'I try not to listen!'

A small element of panic now crept into my brain. To try and maintain some sort of conversational flow I needed to ask about playtesting, or continue with the author theme. Having a quick brain, I decided to incorporate both ploys.

'When you playtest a game can you tell from the way it's written which of your colleagues wrote it?'

He smiled (wow), 'Oh yes, definitely. Jeff O'Neill (*Nord And Bert Couldn't Make Head Or Tail Of It*), for example, has a sardonic wit which is very bubbly and easily recognised . . . '

I interrupted, too quickly I think, 'And your own style?'

'I have a reputation for purple prose. My descriptions are what my partners call 'flowery'.'

I desperately tried to remember a particularly flowery location in *The Lurking Horror*, failed miserably and blurted out something about the zombie waxing the floor.

'Did you realise that the whole of the GUE campus was actually fashioned on MIT which me and my buddies attended?'

'Was it really?' I asked realising that articulation may not be one of my stronger points.

'Yes, it's actually a mirror image of the place, and the dome and everything is really there. The guy who waxes the floor looked like a zombie and he did try to stop us students exploring all those little nooks and crannies and . . . ' he looked at me as though some revelation was due . . . , 'there was a room along this featureless corridor which had a door marked Alchemy Lab.'

My eyes widened as I recalled what lay behind this door in the game.

'What was in this room?' I asked, hardly daring to listen to the answer.

'I don't know. I never went into it.'

Damn!! One shock horror scandal out the window. I would at this point have dearly loved to continue my in-depth questioning on *The Lurking Horror* (and perhaps even gleaned some tips), but professionalism took over, and taking a sip of nectar I decided to change the direction of my questioning. Unfortunately Mr Lebling couldn't hear me with my back to him so I turned round again.

"We use a Dec System 20 which is a large, early Sixties main-frame."

DISCOUNTING GRAPHICS

'Do you feel that perhaps Infocom are being left behind by the likes of Magnetic Scrolls and Level 9, what with their complex parsers and picturesque graphics?'

'No.'

Aaaaaarrghhh . . . not again please. 'Why?'

'Discounting their graphics, they are doing what Infocom has been doing for years. It's very complimentary to have such skilled people emulate your efforts.'

Failing miserably to hide my shocked expression I grilled David on the graphics issue. 'Why do you discount their rather splendid graphics so easily, don't you like them?'

'Yes they're very nice, but do they actually add to the game and how one may play or win?'

I knew about these situations, I've watched Wogan. There is always a stage during the interview when the interviewee tries to turn the tables and take control. This was not going to happen to me.

Brilliantly turning his question into another I said: 'So you feel graphics are an extra to adventure games and have no real place among the prose?'

'That's right. Houses, trees and so on which appear in the pictures and not in the text cannot usually be examined or manipulated, and once they can we begin to approach that



Any one for bridge? Amiga



may be gained by either by positioning the cursor in the area you want him to go to and clicking the fire button if using a joystick, left button if using a mouse, or by pressing the cursor keys. And our hero's walking speed may be selected as slow, normal or fast depending on the situation he is currently dealing with.

The parser is adequate, understanding phrases like 'Talk to the gnome' or 'Give the keycard to the Sarien', and any words which the game does not understand are printed on screen with the message 'I do not understand '......'' – very helpful. Should you enter a particular location and not recognise what you are looking at, then LOOK AROUND gives a description of where you are and what surrounds you – ideal for identifying cértain obscure graphical representations.

Picking up, dropping, examining and using items found may be utilised via text input as can interaction with other characters met. Lots of useful functions are included in *Space Quest* such as a save/load option, the sound may be toggled on or off, the last input may be repeated and a line of text can be cancelled should the player have a last minute change of heart.

Space Quest is huge and once you get used to the regular disk accessing (every location!), the game becomes very enjoyable. It is perhaps a little slower than the more text orientated adventures – forgetting to pick up the cartridge, for instance, until just about to board the shuttle is a bad situation as it takes an age to trek back to the computer console and then back down to the docking bay, by which time the ship one is trying to escape from has probably blown up.

The graphics themselves are nothing to inspire and the spot FX are barely functional but there is something about the game which is highly addictive and very enjoyable. One just has to keep

thin line which divides arcade and adventure games.'

This was obviously a huge topic for debate. Sadly time was against me and a couple more questions had to be answered and quickly if I was to make it back to fortress Newsfield before nightfall.

Forget the flow I thought, just ask the questions. 'What machine do you write your adventures on David?'

'We use a Dec System 20 which is a large, early Sixties mainframe with thousands of megabytes at its disposal. It's a very fast machine of an architectural type no longer made. Visually it's reminiscent of something used in the early *Flash Gordon* movies, all wheels and pipes.'

'Finally,' I lied, 'where do you see Infocom going?'

'Our games system *Zil* has been updated to *Xzil* (don't ask), and it's on this utility that *Beyond Zork* has been written.'

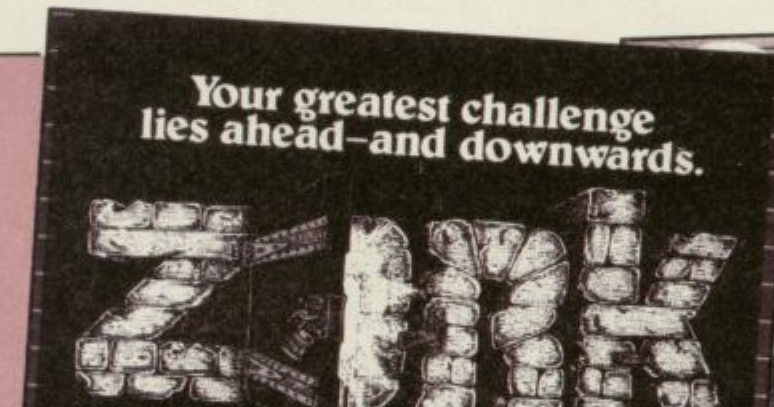
'*Beyond Zork*?' I asked, pretending to know nothing about this venture.

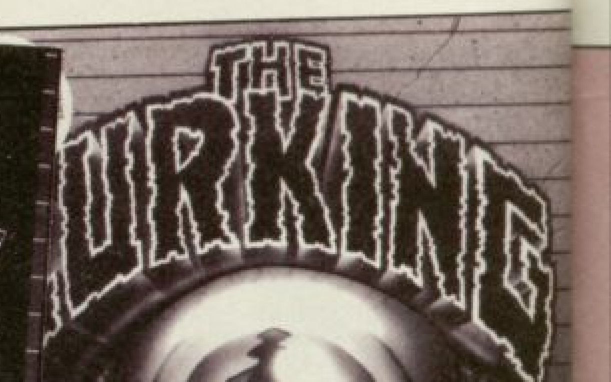
'Yes, *Beyond Zork*. It's our new game. We're very excited about it as it incorporates more of a role-playing style with statistics such as strength, charisma and so on, being available to the player. These will be shown on screen in the form of bar charts . . . '

He must have seen the look of sheer horror on my face because he quickly added: 'In no way will it detract from the adventure element of the game. It will add to it. There's even the option to work your way through the game as a text adventure with hardly any role-play elements at all. Our playtesters have had more fun playing this game than any other adventure we've done, we take this as a good sign pointing the way for us to go.'

'It does sound very interesting,' I said. 'What if it flops?'

'Then we go back to the old style game.'





"I have a reputation for purple prose. My descriptions are what my partners call 'flowery'."

"Our playtesters have had more fun playing *Beyond Zork* than any other adventure we have done."



Oh oh, someone's nicked the Star Generator – Amiga

going against all odds to see what lies in the next screen and ultimately exactly how big this adventure is. I was quite pleased with myself when I eventually escaped the ship and landed on the planet, only to find out that I had barely scratched the surface (pun intended). I shall keep returning to *Space Quest* until I surface the victor, but in the meantime I thank Sierra for supplying a very good game.

ATMOSPHERE 79%
INTERACTION 58%
OVERALL 74%

NORD AND BERT COULDN'T MAKE HEAD OR TAIL OF IT

Infocom
ATARI ST Diskette: £24.99
AMIGA Diskette: £29.99
PC Diskette: £29.99
COMMODORE 64/128 Diskette only: £24.99
AMSTRAD Diskette only: £24.99
ATARI XE/XL Diskette: £24.99

It is confession time I think, I have never played *Ballyhoo*! I mention this because *Nord And Bert . . .* was written by the same guy, **Jeff O' Neill**. Jeff (born 1958) left California State University armed only with an undergraduate degree in journalism and began his career with Infocom as a game tester – he specialised in playing *Hitchhikers Guide To The Galaxy*. His influences are Nietzsche (a prominent German Philosopher who, among other things, developed the theory of Superman (no, not the one who wears his knickers outside his trousers!),) and Mort Sahl (who didn't!). The very first Infocom story he wrote was *Ballyhoo*.

Nord And Bert is a decidedly different sort of offering from the *Zork* zone than we have come to expect. The first thing to note is that it is a collection of eight short stories each of which involves punning, wordplay and general verbal trickery. The scenarios are played independently of each other although a password has to be gleaned from the first seven (the order in which they are tackled is entirely up to the player) to enable access to the last story, which is entitled *Meet The Mayor*. The necessity for mapping is made redundant as accessible locations are displayed at the top of the screen and movement is gained by inputting the appropriate name. Examining items may be achieved by simply typing the name of the object the player wishes to study – no more examine errors! – although a closer look may require inputs such as LOOK INSIDE or LOOK THROUGH 'object name'.

The basic idea of the game is to study the locations and objects or characters in the vicinity and try to spot the spoonerisms (words with sounds transposed such as the 'well-boiled icicle' and the 'well-oiled bicycle') or homonyms (differing words which sound alike,' stair' and 'stare' for instance) to solve the puzzles. Whilst in the British aisle within the Shopping Bizarre scenario the player is confronted with a Box Boy who is busy putting boxes onto shelves beneath a sign which reads 'Putting Area'. The way to dispose of this boy is obscurity at its worst; the idea is to input the words 'Pudding Section' to clear-up the putting area and reveal a line of ants which of course will transform into bustling ladies when the player types in the word Aunts. A tantrum throwing little girl appears at one point, the ribbon in her hair carries the words 'worst brat', if the player is getting into the swing of the game then it will





SLOW ON THE 64

Here it was then. The final question, the one which I had been building up to all through the interview, hoping I'd have the courage when it came to it. I did. 'Why is the disk access time on the Commodore 64 versions of your game so slow?'

He stared at me with those eyes of his (what else?). The ground trembled and beams of light shot into the sanctum (as Clare opened the door). Would David Lebling, this king of adventuredom actually bother to answer, or would he just end the interview here and now with but a flick of a hand? To my relief he smiled and spoke . . .

'At this present time our days are taken up developing new systems and writing new games. When things quieten down sufficiently we will certainly make time to work on this problem. Obviously the larger the game is the more the smaller machines such as the 64 have to access the disk. But until we develop the system, players will regrettably have to sacrifice speed for size.'

Throughout our short time together my opinion of Mr Lebling had grown higher and higher. His calm thoughtful answers, and his patience in dealing with a none too-experienced interviewer were certainly elements of the day which I would remember. All too soon, and feeling a mite drained, I departed for the domain of the innkeeper to collect my thoughts on the very pleasant previous hour.



soon dawn that to change her into something more manageable he must type in 'Bratwurst', which, as we all know, is a sausage and much easier to deal with than a little girl.

I didn't enjoy this game, no atmosphere no excitement just lots of experimenting with words, very dull. Its links with the adventuring world are very tenuous indeed and I hope Infocom don't make *Nord And Bert* a precedent . . . I shan't vote for either of them.

ATMOSPHERE 31%
INTERACTION 51%
OVERALL 41%

THE LURKING HORROR

Infocom
AMIGA Diskette: £29.99
ATARI ST Diskette: £29.99
PC Diskette: £29.99
COMMODORE 64/128 Diskette only: £24.99
AMSTRAD CPC Diskette only: £24.99
ATARI XL/XE Diskette: £24.99

I had the pleasure of meeting the author of *Lurking Horror* whilst at the PCW show (remember that?) and to me he seemed polite, mild-mannered and generally a nice guy (see interview elsewhere in this section). I would never have thought that this symbol of niceness could be capable of creating something as horrific and bloodthirsty as *Lurking Horror*. **David Lebling** either needs his brain checking out for hidden psychotic tendancies or, as is probably the case, he is a very imaginative writer. In the interview I held with him he states that his trademark is purple prose, I think he's changed his colour preference to red.

The nightmare begins with the player, as a student at the GUE Tech., braving a violent snowstorm in order to get to the computer centre on campus and finish work on an assignment. Unfortunately the power of the storm increases drastically and he finds himself trapped within the complex for the night – he is not alone . . .



Accessing his personal computer (something which very wisely can only be done via the contents of the game package), the intention was to complete the assignment, unfortunately something seems to be amiss and he is dragged into a different world, a primitive world of sacrifices, tribal rituals, magic and unearthly creatures. Thankfully escape isn't too difficult and soon the player should find himself back in front of his computer wondering what the hell is going on. The hacker, who is in the room with our hero, appears ignorant of these strange goings on, although he does have his uses in the game, you could even say he plays a key role.

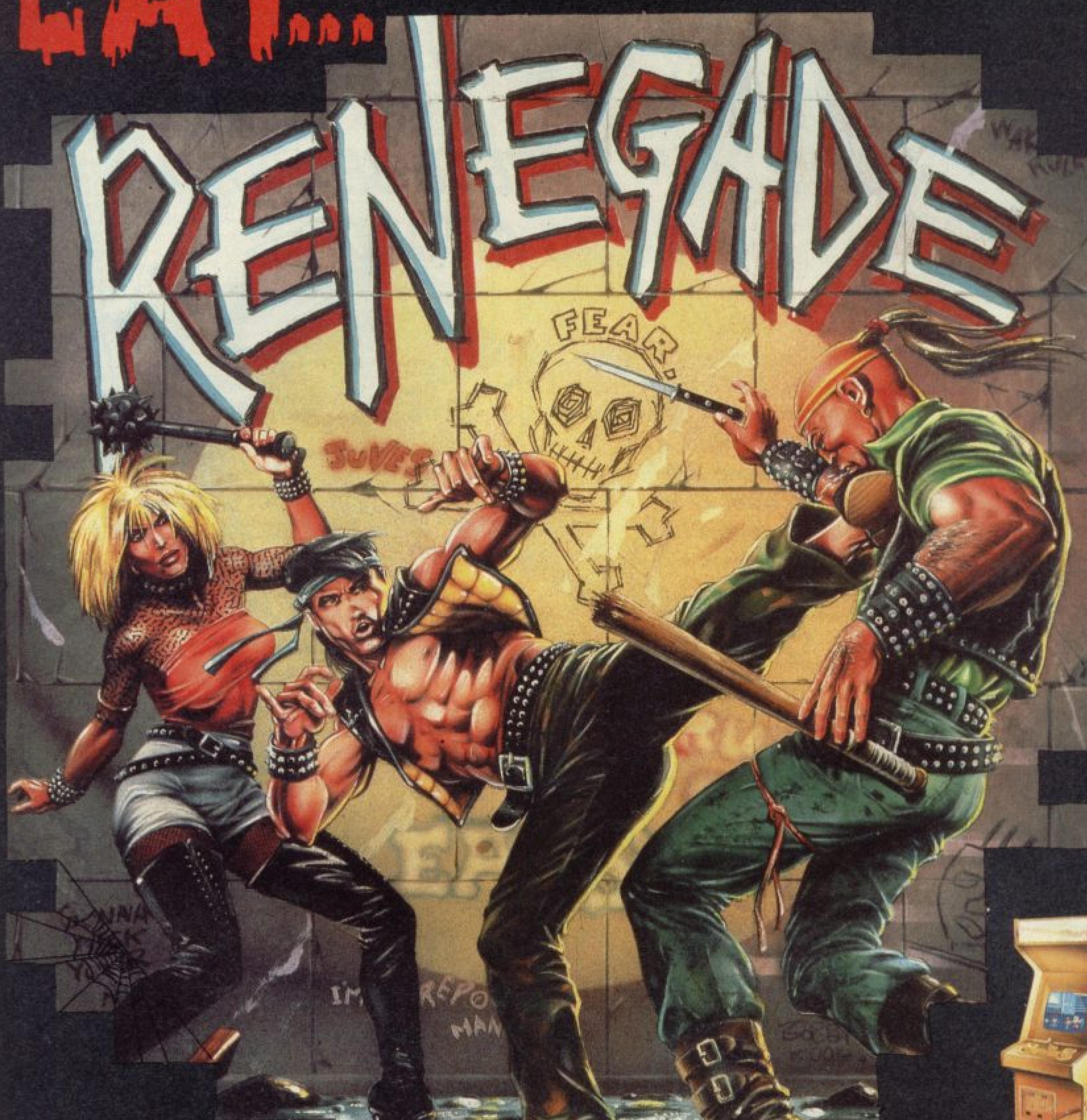
Exploration of the campus reveals plenty to see and do. What lurks behind the door to the Alchemy Lab proves very interesting and places the player in a very exciting predicament, one which is very satisfying to overcome.

Throughout the adventure Mr Lebling maintains the spooky atmosphere although the tension is broken periodically by little snippets of humorous prose. I have played both the Commodore 64 and Amiga versions and although they are basically the same, the Amiga game does have sound effects (IN AN INFOOCOM GAME!? well yes, and they) nicely complement the text descriptions. The size of the game and the amount of puzzles there are to solve, together with the very professional implementation of *Lurking Horror* make it yet another masterpiece from Infocom. Playing it alone in a darkened room at the dead of night is not recommended for the weak of heart.

ATMOSPHERE 88%
INTERACTION 82%
OVERALL 85%

Back to reality I suppose, until January, when I shall be coming at you monthly (can you wait?). If you feel stirred to put pen to paper and communicate with me about any adventure related topic please feel free: ROB STEEL, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.

PLAY...

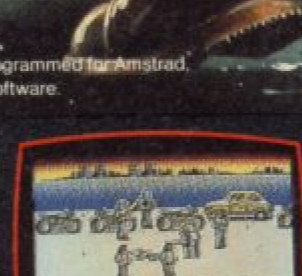


TAITO
COIN-OP

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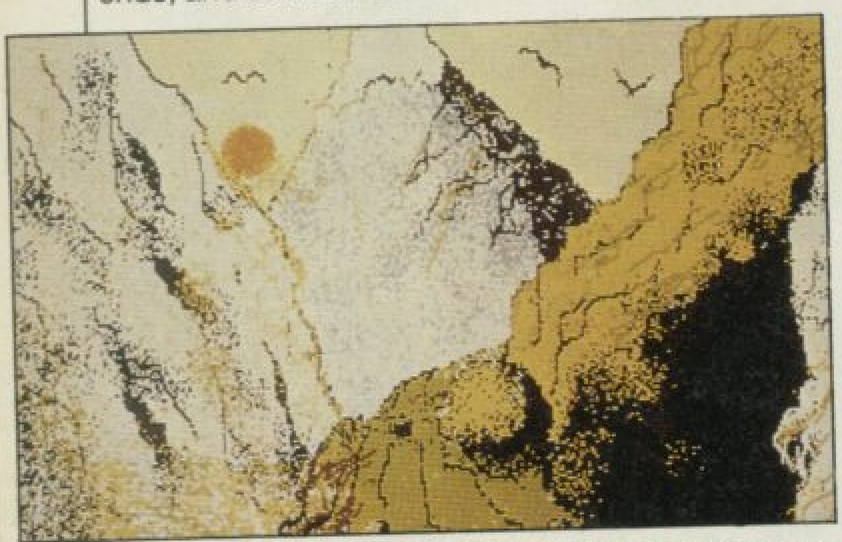

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Piranha

DEGAS THE IMPRESSIONIST

Electronic Arts have just released the follow up to the Atari ST art utility Degas**. Priced at only £24.95,** Degas Elite **is a sophisticated package, as Robin Candy found out.**

Until recently, art packages for home computers were very limiting. At the low-cost end, the Spectrum only allows a maximum of two colours in any one attribute from a possible eight-colour palette. Colourfully realistic graphics are hard to achieve, the entire picture has to be carefully planned out before setting a single pixel on screen. That so many high quality pictures have been created on the Spectrum just goes to show the ingenuity of some graphic artists. But the rise in popularity of 16-bit computers, along with price reductions in hardware, has opened a whole new area to the budding graphic artist, and provided software which apes that being used in very much more sophisticated and expensive dedicated graphics front ends, and sometimes even matches them.

" . . . no art utility would be complete without a zoom facility and Degas Elite **boasts a highly effective one . . . "**



A doodle from THE GAMES MACHINE: Nik Wild conceived the picture – outside the Goblin's Cave from The Hobbit – and drew it, Oliver Frey added some colour and smoothed it out

A picture which clearly shows the richness that can be created by keeping the working colours in a tight chromatic key.

Neither the Light Bikes or Robin Candy's Music For The Masses, was digitised, they were all done freehand

Marketed in the UK by **Electronic Arts**, *Degas Elite* is a versatile, high quality Atari ST graphics utility from a Canadian company with the rather hard cell name of **Batteries Included**. *Degas* (apart from being the name of a famous French post-Impressionist painter, it stands for **D**esign & **E**ntertainment **G**raphic **A**rts **S**ystem) runs in a WIMP environment (see box), so it's quick to used to.

Three modes are catered for: low resolution – 16 colours available; medium-res – four colours; and high-res – only available with a monochrome monitor. This article only deals with the colour functions. And if you are using **Electronic Arts**'s file format it is possible to import pictures from the Atari800 and XL and XE series or the Amiga.

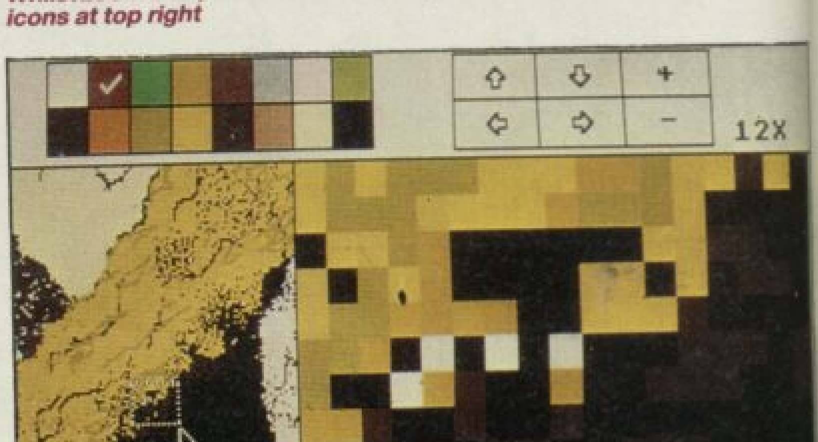
FROM STIPPLE TO SMEAR

All the *Degas* functions can be manipulated from the main menu screen. The top line, Desk, File, Set, Make and Block provide pull down sub-menus, and more of those later. The other options relate mainly to Degas's drawing features. These include all the functions you would expect from a powerful art utility, such as airbrush, stipple, smear, brush, erase as well as a host of shapes, line drawing options and fill. Let's take a quick look at those first.

Airbrush provides the artist with the ability to paint large areas very quickly with a random pixel effect. **Stipple** behaves in a similar manner but reproduces the effect using the currently selected brush. However, for finer work it proves to be less controllable than airbrush mode. **Smear**, a function now almost essential to artists on really powerful professional front ends, 'smears' colours into each other where they meet, avoiding those ugly mechanical hard edges. Professionally this is done by blending adjacent pixels, *Degas* randomises the pixels in the area around the current brush or airbrush, consequently the result is less than satisfactory. In fact the same effect can be achieved and improved



Degas Elite's zoom facility has ten selections from coarse to very 'fat'. Whilst zoomed in, the window can be scrolled in four directions with the icons at top right



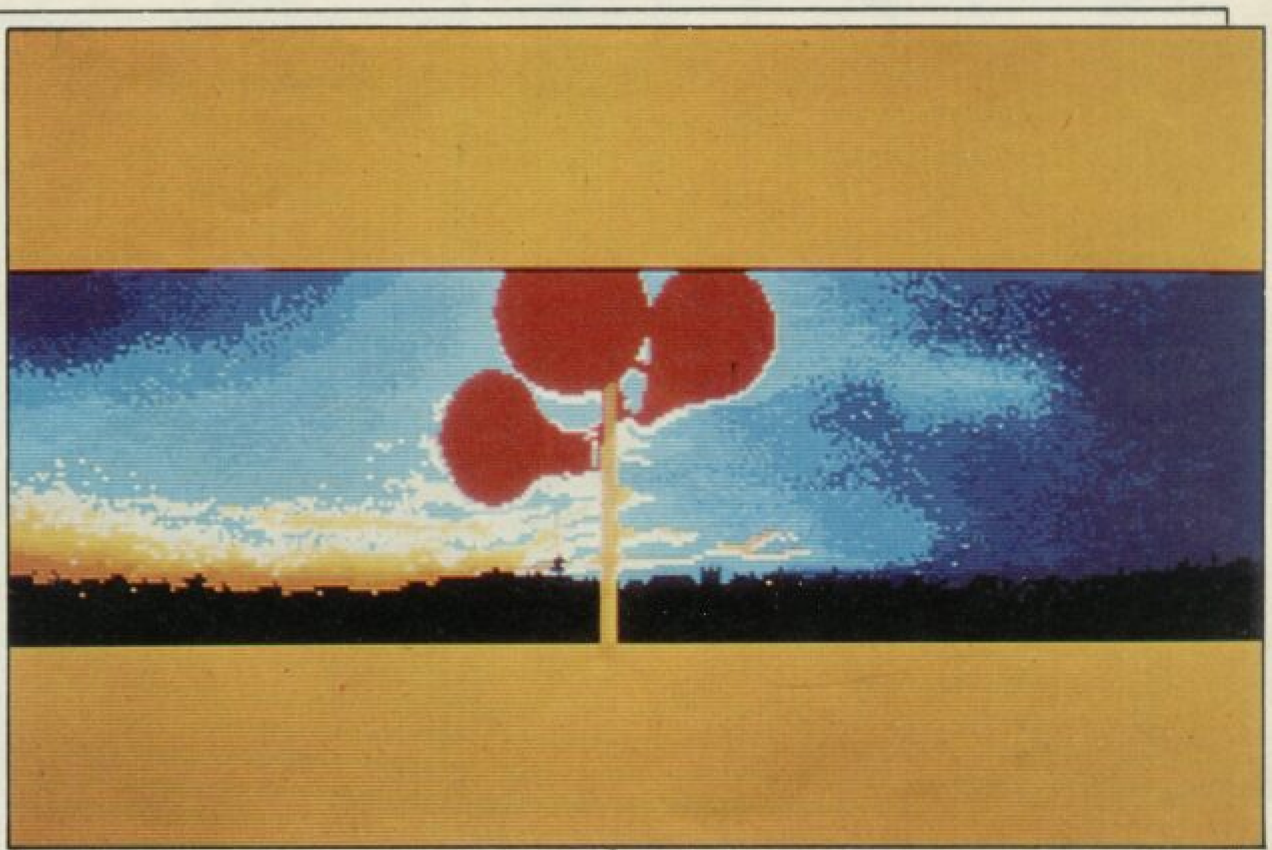
upon by airbrushing over the area you wish to smear.

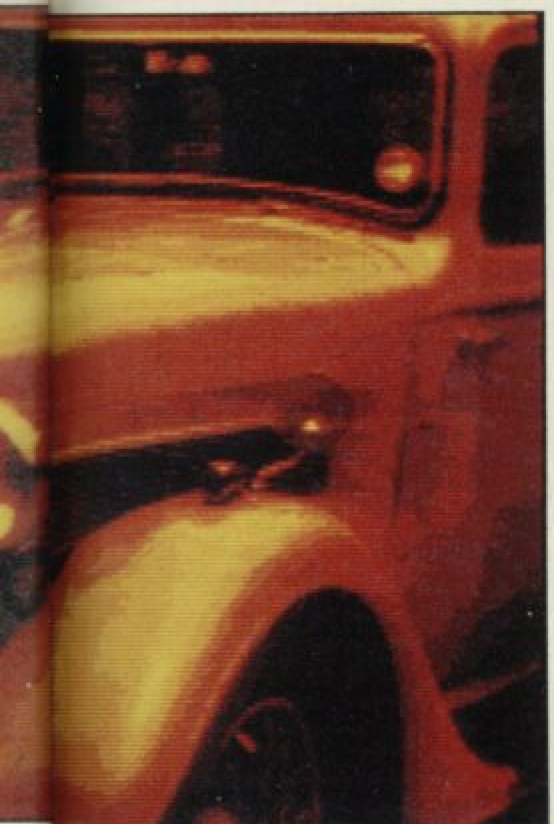
Fifteen preset brush sizes and shapes are available (though you can design your own), and the precise effect these have on screen is dependent on what other drawing functions are selected.

Point allows you to click a single impression of the current brush on to the screen. **Eraser** rubs out in the shape of the brush. **Draw** paints the brush shape on screen freehand by following the movement of the mouse until the mouse button is released. **Line** produces a guideline which can be dragged anywhere on screen, releasing the button sets the current brush shape as a straight line between the clicked on and off points. **K-Line** draws continuous lines, which can be used to build up complex shapes – a bit like 'join the dots' pictures.

SHAPING UP

Shapes are well catered for, especially in conjunction with the rotate and distort facilities. **Polygon** operates similarly to K-Line, making many-sided shapes which, when





closed, automatically fill with the current colour. **Rays** draws several lines all starting from the same specified cursor point and going to any other desired points.

Circles of any size can be dragged within a box guide – if the box is elongated then an elipse is formed when the mouse button is released. **Disc** is essentially the same as circle except the end result is filled with the current colour/pattern. **Frame** and **Box** have a similar relationship respectively – you define the opposite corners of the proposed shape, with Box automatically filling the resultant quadrilateral.

Outline is a useful function; clicking within a shape of colour, draws an outline in a specified colour around the shape. This can be used for highlighting objects, or neatly erasing any 'pencil roughs' that were used to define shapes at an earlier stage of drawing.

Fill fills shapes with the selected colour/pattern. Fill functions always require care in use; it needs a delineated area and even one pixel break in a line will cause the adjacent shape to be filled as well. However, pressing the UNDO key, erases the last action. Otherwise, of course, you can select solid white and refill the shapes before repairing the damage!

While most of *Degas*'s functions have legitimate uses, I think that Disc and Box are a bit pointless when the same effect can be achieved with little extra effort by using the Circle or Frame command coupled with Fill.

DISTORTING THE TRUTH

So much for drawing, what about graphic effects? It's here that *Degas* begins to show its true colours. **Mirror** duplicates in reverse symetry what you are drawing elsewhere on the screen, split in two horizontally, vertically, diagonally or a combination of all three.

Shadow adds a 'shadow' of a selectable colour to the current brush shape and colour being drawn. The shadow position and its size may be defined. Two useful and increasing standard art utility functions are also provided in *Degas Elite*; **Slowdraw** defines the speed at which the cursor moves, while **Snap** overlays a temporary grid – selectable between two and 16 pixels – on the drawing, and 'snaps' the cursor to the nearest grid point for accurate placing of lines and shapes.

Text enables the addition of writing to a picture. There are several text sizes and the Font selected can be redefined within a separate program supplied in *Degas*.

BLOCKING OUT

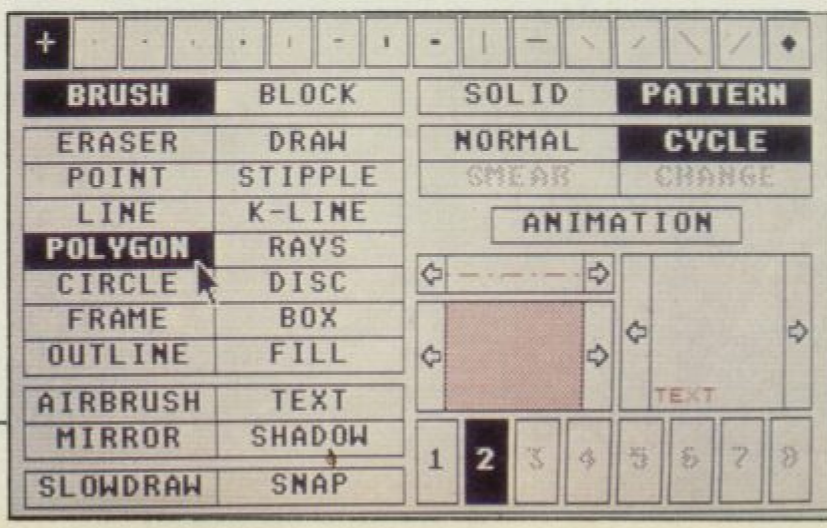
The most powerful facility is **Block** mode, which is dedicated to manipulating windows. A window around a selected part of a drawing is defined by dragging full-screen cross hairs to create a regular block – or polygonal blocks may also be formed. Once this is done, several options are open. The block can be grabbed, dragged and printed anywhere else on screen, and the process can be repeated to form multiple blocks. **Rotate** in the Block mode works very well in *Degas*, with a full 360° rotation available. **Stretch** allows redefinition of the block's size through both horizontal and vertical parameters, while **H-Skew** and **V-Skew** tilt it either horizontally or vertically. **Distort** is used to create a freehand manipulation of the block's contents to quite dramatic effect, even to folding the drawing over on itself.

Finally, blocks may be saved to disk for future use, or copied into other work files. Here *Degas* makes working

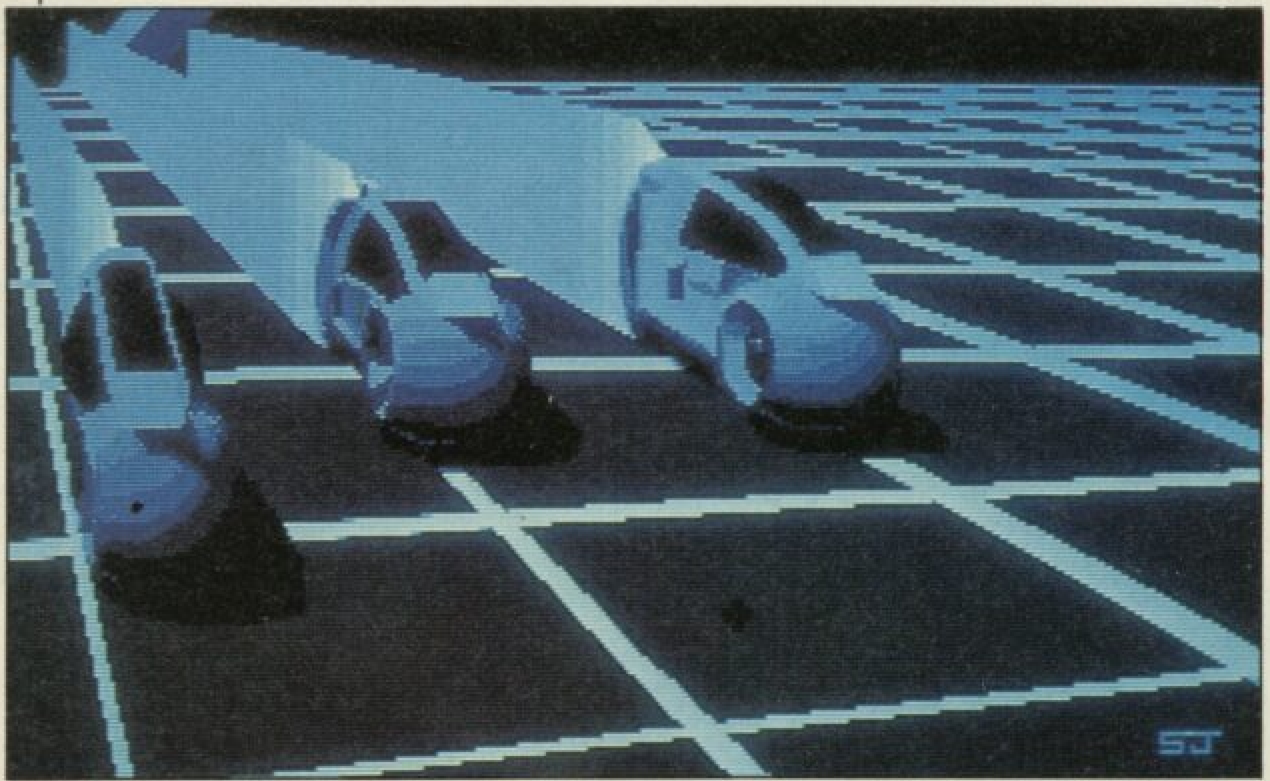
Music For The Masses: after only one hour's hands-on-experience with Degas, Robin Candy started on this freehand digitisation of the newest Depeche Mode album cover. It took him two hours to complete it.

"Distort is a manipulation of quite dramatic effect, even to folding the drawing over on itself . . . "

"Degas Elite is a marvellous utility at a price hardly above that of a game . . . "



Degas Elite ***main menu***



The Light Bikes from Tron by ZZAP! 64's Steve Jarratt – theme in a restricted palette of blues

fast and easy. The main menu offers up to eight simultaneous workscreens, numbered and available on a mouse click (up to two for a 520ST and all eight for a 1040). Copying material from one to another is instantaneous.

ANIMATED ART

A form of 'ripple' animation of a sophistication only restricted by the ingenuity of the individual artist, is possible through two functions, **Animation** and **Cycle**. When used in conjunction with each other, they give the impression of movement. What they are really doing is switching between a preselected sequence of colours at a predefined speed. Cycle also works through the preselected colours, changing the colour with each new brush stroke, or it can be used to create multicoloured lines.

DEFINING OPTIONS

Most definable settings are achieved by double clicking on the desired function box, which produces a dialogue menu. But greater function enhancement is possible from the top line of the main menu.

Desk just tells you the program name and its author. **File** pulls down a sub-menu dealing with loading and saving files. You can also erase a complete workscreen. As is usual with WIMPs, it's well error-trapped and trying to load a picture brings about the prompt that doing so will erase the picture currently in Workspace 1 – OK or Cancel?. At every load or save, a quick disk directory is provided – a friendly touch. *Degas* also includes a compression function which reduces the amount of disk space your picture takes up and an option to define picture resolution.

Set allows alteration of the default parameters of various main menu options. ***Airbrush*** – define size and spraying speed. ***Animation*** – set colour-change speed, set animation left, right or off, select palette of colours to be affected. ***Mirror*** – define which way the image is to be mirrored and distance separation. ***Shadow*** – set parameters and shadow colour, size and distance. ***Colour*** – set colour palette; a colour can be changed by altering the amount of red, blue or green in it. Colours may be copied from one area of the palette to another simply by dragging them with the mouse. And it is possible to define a range of hues between any two colours – just pick colours you want to use, leaving a few empty palette boxes between them, and the computer will work out the intermediate shades for you.

"Shapes are well catered for, especially in conjunction with the rotate and distort facilities."

Make provides three options. ***Make Fill***, allows the creation of patterns in an enlarged window, pixel by pixel. ***Make Line*** and ***Make Brush*** let you define lines (so that patterned lines can be created, for instance) and extra brushes, should the ones already present in the program not be enough.

The **Block** function we have already dealt with.

Of course no art utility would be complete without a zoom facility and *Degas Elite* boasts a highly effective one. There are ten different zoom sizes accessed through the function keys, and the resulting box can be moved over the area to be enlarged. The enlarged pixel editor picture is displayed on the right of screen with the unenlarged area shown on the left, repeating the changes made in the zoomed pixel editor.

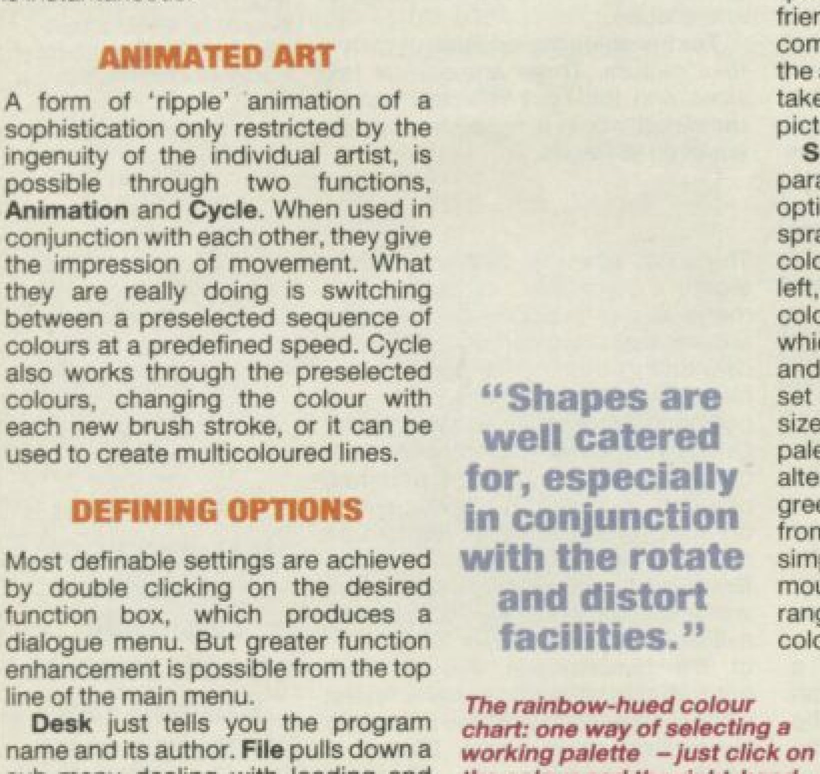
CONCLUSIONS

Degas Elite is a very powerful and flexible art utility. Though it comes complete with an easily-read but detailed manual, the program itself is so easy to use that the manual soon becomes only a reference guide for the odd moment when you get stuck.

The Block functions are extremely powerful, allowing the artist to pick up parts of the screen and manipulate them with the greatest of ease, and the zoom facility is one of the best I've seen. The only real let-down is the cursor. This always takes the colour currently selected, which is fine when working in areas of a contrasting colour but not so useful when airbrushing in an area predominantly made up of the current colour – it's all too easy to lose the cursor. A better choice would have been a black cursor (switching to white when necessary).

But apart from this minor niggle, *Degas Elite* is a marvellous utility allowing the artist to exploit the Atari ST's graphics capability to the full at a price hardly above that of a game, and certainly a lot lower than the cost of an artist's oil paint palette.

The rainbow-hued colour chart: one way of selecting a working palette – just click on the colour and the right-hand bar shows what you've got



WIMP BASHING & DTP

Some years ago Apple attempted to create a computer operating system that would be instantly accessible to business people who needed computers but couldn't cope with the arcane complexities of Disk Operating System (DOS). They came up with the Lisa. Instead of typing syntactical commands at a prompt, the user controls a cursor by moving the mouse, and accesses parts of the program by pointing at relevant options and clicking the mouse key, thus negating the need for complicated keyboard sequences. Choosing a particular option may cause a sub-menu to be pulled down containing further options, which may lead to yet further menus. Some selections act as toggles to switch functions on or off. Options currently selected are highlighted by inverting the box.

The philosophy behind Lisa was that the computer did all the work for you. It was much friendlier than DOS. Lisa never took off, but the idea did, and so did Apple's Macintosh computer which really used the system to its full. And so we got the WIMP environment – Windows, Icons, Mouse and Pull-down menus. *Degas Elite* follows this vogue which is now currently used on almost all popular machines, from the Spectrum upwards.

WIMPs have had a vital part to play in the growth of Desk Top Publishing (DTP), and in future issues of THE GAMES MACHINE we shall be looking at why they have, the current state of the DTP art, and what this fascinating new field holds in store for the hobbyist and the professional, from both the point of view of text and graphics.

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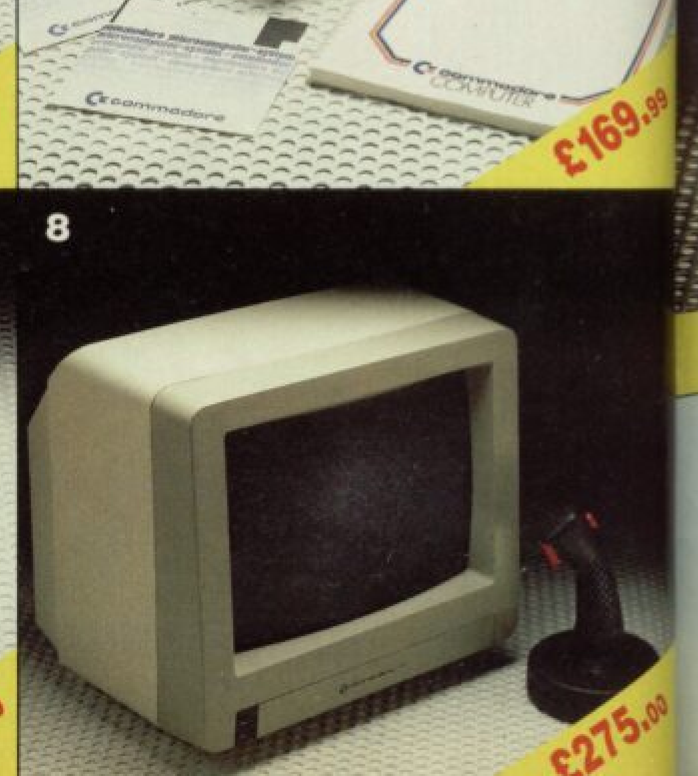












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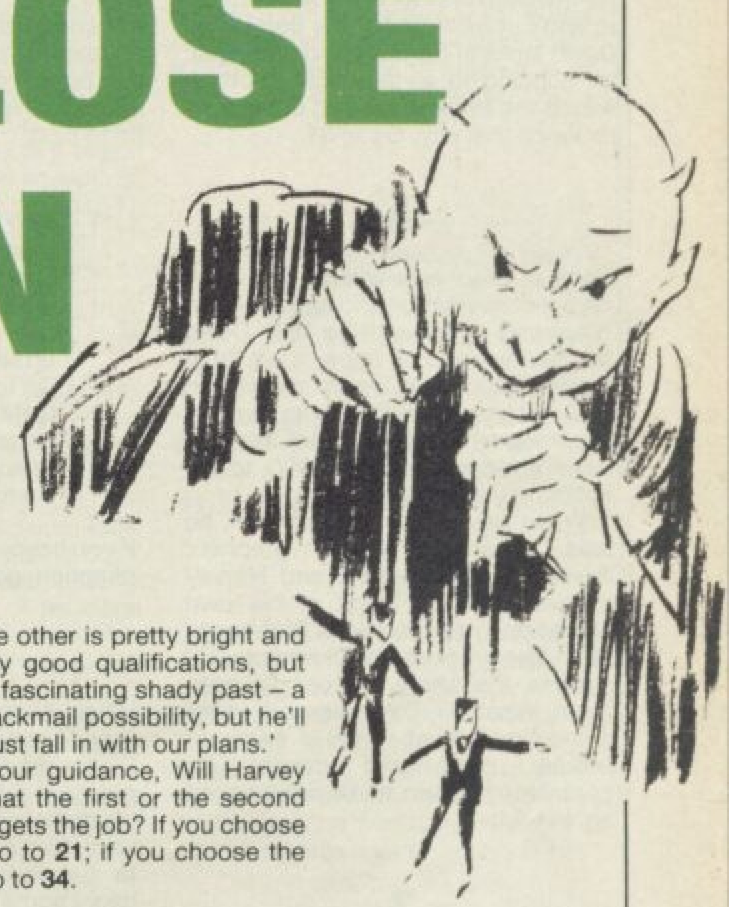
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HOW TO LOSE A MILLION DOLLARS



Find out exactly how Jeffrey Archer's famous literary 'scam' came about in the novel NOT A PENNY MORE, NOT A PENNY LESS by playing this word game contrived exclusively for THE GAMES MACHINE by Robin Waterfield, who wrote the computer game version for Domark.

DOMARK have published a computer game version of Jeffrey Archer's *Not A Penny More, Not A Penny Less*, in which you try to recover $1m which has been stolen from the character you play and your friends. But how did you come to lose this money? What happens before the game begins?

In this short choose-your-own-adventure game, you play the part of a minor devil. Your job is to oversee business rip-offs on planet Earth – an insignificant planet in a remote part of an obscure galaxy. If you successfully manage the present scam, you hope to get promoted to a more important job.

The protagonists in the scam are a number of innocents worthy only of your scorn, and a villain devious enough to warm the cockles of your heart (if you had one!). May Old Nick himself look favourably upon your manipulations!

The game depends largely upon your own choices, but at certain points luck may play a part. At such points, when you will be asked to 'generate a number', roll a six-sided die (if you have one) or close your eyes and prod this table with a pencil or something similar:

1	5	6
4	3	2

– 1 –

You hover invisibly over the antique, leather-topped desk at which Harvey Metcalfe is sitting. He is putting the finishing touches on a plan he has devised (actually, you devised it and put it into his mind!) – a plan which, if successful, will make him a lot of easy money.

The stage reached so far is this: Harvey has set up a legitimate company called Prospecta Oil, with a holding in the North Sea. He himself holds the majority of the shares. North Sea oil exploration is an exciting field, so the shares are standing at a moderate price. Nothing illegal so far . . .

Harvey is in consultation with Bernie Silverman, his equally crooked sidekick. 'We need a dupe,' says Harvey. 'Have you drawn up a shortlist of candidates for the job we advertised for a manager of the London office of Prospecta Oil?' 'Yes,' says Bernie. 'There are two possibilities: one is not too smart, but thanks to hard work he's just graduated from Harvard Business School; the other is pretty bright and has equally good qualifications, but also has a fascinating shady past – a definite blackmail possibility, but he'll probably just fall in with our plans.'

Under your guidance, Will Harvey suggest that the first or the second candidate gets the job? If you choose the first, go to **21**; if you choose the second, go to **34**.

– 2 –

If David has already had dinner with his Auntie May, go to **29**; otherwise, go to **40**.

– 3 –

David's instincts are too strong: he rebuffs the stranger. What will you have David do next? Return to **10** and choose again.

– 4 –

Over dinner, the conversation naturally turns to David's present job, and his relatives are suitably impressed by his swift acquisition of a managerial post. You are tempted to do something silly like causing Uncle Dick's toupée to slip; but you decide to behave like a serious devil, not a mischievous sprite. Dinner reminds David of his long-standing opinions of his relatives: Auntie May is a superficial socialite, in his view, and Uncle Dick a self-important puffball.

It is household tradition that after dinner the men have brandy at the table, while May goes off and prepares coffee. Will you have David use the opportunity to approach Uncle Dick alone about investing in Prospecta Oil (go to **11**), or Auntie May alone (go to **39**), or both together (go to **32**)?

people prancing around the stage in mouse costumes, looking for cheese, are supposed to represent man's eternal quest for self-fulfilment

– 5 –

Dr Robin Oakley epitomises the young, successful and slightly bored GP. He makes small talk while prodding and poking at David's body, and you have no difficulty in arousing

in him some interest in Prospecta Oil. He invites David to lunch at his club, to find out more about the company. David looks in his diary and finds that he is going to an American football match the evening before, but is free for lunch that day. Go to **31**.

– 6 –

Back in Stephen's rooms, you work on the conversation and especially on Stephen's mind until he tells David that he has recently come into a lot of money and would like to invest it in this exciting-sounding company of his. Keep a note somewhere that you have arranged for $250,000 to be spent on Prospecta shares.

When David returns to London, he tells Silverman about Stephen; Silverman tells Harvey, and Harvey releases a large block of his own shares on to the market for Stephen to buy. The interest in Prospecta Oil pushes the share prices up even more. What will David do next in his spare time? Auntie May is away on holiday now, and cannot be contacted. Return to **10** and choose again.

– 7 –

What little he can find out does not give him any reason to think that there is anything wrong with the set-up. He doesn't even come across Harvey Metcalfe's name: as far as he is concerned, Bernie Silverman is the boss. David wasn't looking for anything fishy anyway: he thought it would create a good impression if it got back to Silverman that he had made a few inquiries. Go to **41**.

– 8 –

David gets chummy with the woman sitting next to him in the stadium and shares his beer with her. This stops him drinking so much, and next day he feels ready to face lunch at a London Club.

Again, it takes little of your skill to get Dr Robin Oakley to steer the conversation round to Prospecta Oil. David has come equipped with a copy of the geologist's report, and Robin is suitably impressed. He will buy $250,000 worth of shares – make a note of this.

David tells Silverman that Robin will invest; Silverman tells Harvey Metcalfe; Harvey releases enough of his own shares for Robin to snap up. Harvey is very happy. What should David do next? Return to **10** and choose again.

– 9 –

Harvey is not too displeased with his profits, but what will Old Nick think of your work? Not a lot, is the answer. You remain bound to the planet Earth with the hopeless task of trying to deflect the good intentions of someone called Bob Geldof.

– 10 –

You must now influence David as regards what he is to do with his spare time. You must choose four from the following list, and pursue only those courses of action. Don't cheat. Tick the boxes now, so that when you return to this location, you know what to do next.

- ☐ Visit friends and relatives — Go to **42**
- ☐ See the sights — Go to **22**
- ☐ Go to a gee-new-ine Harley Street doctor — Go to **27**
- ☐ Go to a Soho night club — Go to **17**
- ☐ Shop in the West End — Go to **12**
- ☐ Go to the theatre — Go to **2**

If you have now pursued four courses of action, go to **35**.

– 11 –

When Auntie May leaves the room, David tackles Uncle Dick directly, but Dick's refusal is blunt. 'The UK may not have such stringent laws against insider information as back home,' he says, 'but as a diplomat I can't afford to get involved in anything which might some day backfire.'

David can still try to persuade Dick while May is present, in case she has any influence over him, as most wives do over their husbands (go to **32**), or he can give up and try another tack. Stephen Bradley is now on a lecture tour of Italy, so if David tries another tack, return to **10** and choose again.

– 12 –

David is usually required to work even on Saturdays – the American work-ethic extends to its offices abroad – but Bernie allows him a day off, and David loafs around the famous shopping streets of London's West End. He conceives the idea of buying a moderately priced painting for the flat in which Prospecta house him rent-free. The painting mustn't be too large, because the flat isn't either – Harvey does not spend unnecessary money.

There are a number of galleries in Bond Street and its side streets, but you and David choose the Lamanns Gallery. If David has previously insulted a 'dapper little Frenchman', go to **25**; otherwise, go to **38**.

– 13 –

David rings Stephen and arranges to go up to Oxford for a High Table dinner at Stephen's college, Magdalen. Just out of envy that there exists such a thing as friendship among humans, you make the phone connection between them crackly and arrange for a crossed-line conversation in Arabic to break in once in a while. But you are only trying to be a nuisance, not to prevent the meeting, of which you have high hopes.

In due course, David travels to Oxford. Stephen Bradley is a bespectacled, pleasant, mild-mannered man – a weakling, you judge. High Table provides the usual sumptuous fare, and David is beginning to get a bit drunk. Will you have him talk about investing in Prospecta Oil over dinner, so that other possible investors among the dons can overhear (go to **20**), or should he wait for the privacy of Stephen's rooms (go to **6**)?



– 14 –

Dr Victor Pritchard is a crusty old codger who looks as though he would fail any check-up himself. More to the point, he just gets on with the business, and doesn't allow David any time to boast about Prospecta Oil. You are disappointed. David isn't of course, since he doesn't know what's going on, and is content to be pronounced physically fit. Return to **10** and choose again.

– 15 –

'You asked for me, Mr Silverman,' says David. 'Call me Bernie,' replies Silverman genially. 'I've good news for you, my boy – for us all. Here, look at this geologist's report.'

David reads the report, while you look over his shoulder. It doesn't make any sense to you, so you read David's mind. It doesn't make much sense to him either, but the bottom line is that the oil field which Prospecta has leased looks set to yield a major strike in the very near future.

'Share prices will rocket,' says Bernie casually. 'Is there any harm in getting in on the act?' asks David. ('Where did that idea come from?' he wonders. You chuckle to yourself.) 'No,' says Bernie, 'but just let me know who wants to invest, and don't spread it around too much.' David reckons that mentioning Prospecta's prospects to a few select people would be a great way of boosting not only his esteem in their eyes, but also the value of the shares he owns in the company, since nothing makes share prices go up so much as increased interest in them. You and David go thoughtfully to **10**.

– 16 –

To your amusement, a glimmer of recognition begins to pass over the Frenchman's face, but is replaced by blankness. Then just as quickly, he becomes the neutral and slightly obsequious gallery manager. Go to **38**.

– 17 –

David prowls around Soho late one evening, peering into shops which offer 'books and magazines' and have strangely worded advertisements taped onto the windows. There are many basement clubs offering various forms of exotic entertainment. The overall effect is extremely seedy: you find it quite delightful! Nevertheless, you guide David away from this part of Soho, which seems to offer no openings for Harvey's scheme, and

towards a more up-market club, frequented by businessmen, off-duty politicians, and altogether a nicer class of criminal.

Having paid an exorbitant entrance-cum-membership fee, David sits through an unspectacular floor show. He tries to engage people in conversation at the bar and at nearby tables, but in such surroundings people are reluctant to talk: who knows what one's neighbour might want to offer? Eventually, you get fed up and cause David to insult a dapper little Frenchman in a velvet suit. The look on the Frenchman's face relieves your boredom; but you get no nearer your goal, which is Harvey's fraudulent prosperity. Return to **10** and choose again.

– 18 –

The company folded obviously only because Harvey was scared of being discovered. You have failed as a devil and will be demoted to being a bug in computer game software!

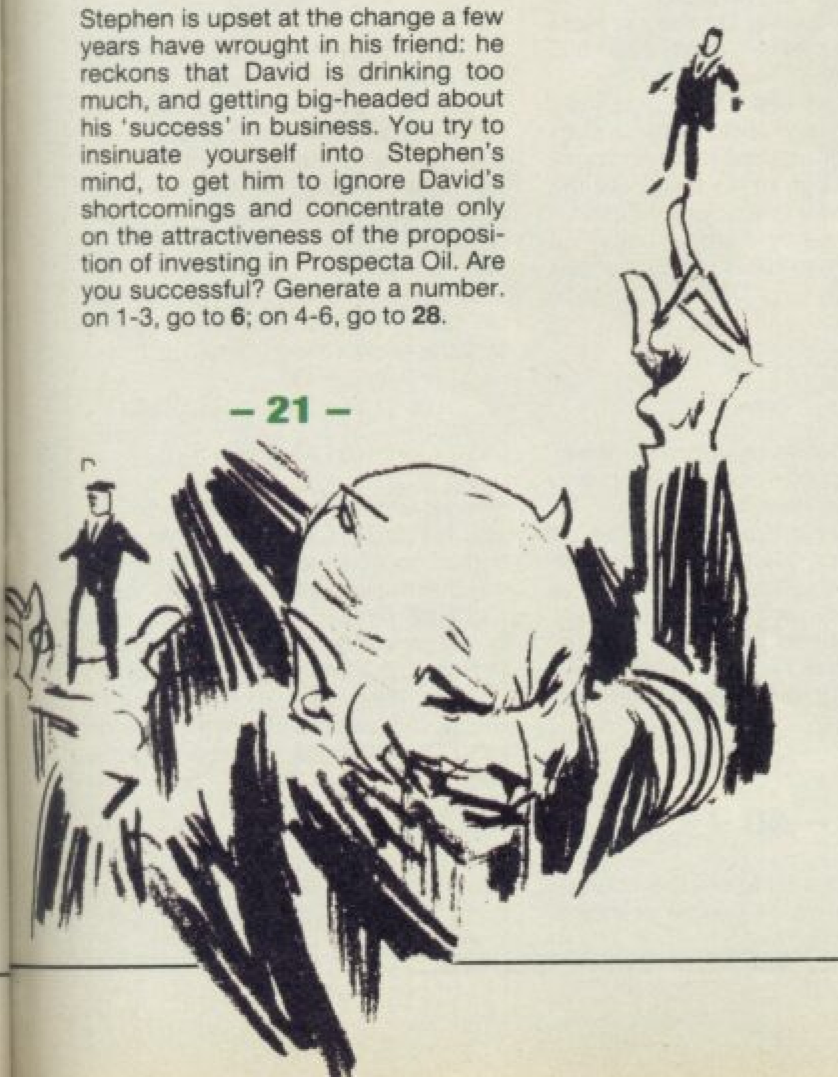
– 19 –

Auntie May is delighted to hear from David, and invites him round for dinner at their luxurious house. However, the invitation is for the evening of 27 February, after May gets back from holiday. If David has booked a seat in the theatre for that evening, he will have to decide between the show and the dinner. If he chooses the show, go to **37** – but you may not return to this course of action (visiting friends and relatives); if he chooses the dinner, or if he hasn't booked at the theatre, go to **4**.

– 20 –

Stephen is upset at the change a few years have wrought in his friend: he reckons that David is drinking too much, and getting big-headed about his 'success' in business. You try to insinuate yourself into Stephen's mind, to get him to ignore David's shortcomings and concentrate only on the attractiveness of the proposition of investing in Prospecta Oil. Are you successful? Generate a number. on 1-3, go to **6**; on 4-6, go to **28**.

– 21 –



he thinks. 'Hard work beats natural talent any day of the week. After all, I've been offered a plum job in an exciting company while some of my cleverer fellow graduates are still unemployed.' Trust you to use the opportunity for instilling a bit of the sin of pride! It occurs to David to investigate the company before accepting the job. Will you let him do so (go to **7**) or not (go to **30**)?

– 22 –

David visits museums, galleries, HMS Belfast, the Tower of London, Madame Tussaud's, Buckingham Palace and 10 Downing Street. No opportunities present themselves for furthering Harvey's ingenious little plan. Moreover, you and David both detect that Bernie Silverman is getting impatient with David, as if he were somehow not fulfilling his expectations. Will you risk one last trip, to the Houses of Parliament, which you reckon offers a reasonable opportunity for insider information to be dropped into receptive ears (go to **33**), or will you give up on this plan (return to **10** and choose again)?

– 23 –

Auntie May is away on holiday and cannot be contacted. David can either visit Stephen Bradley (go to **13**) or pursue another course of action (return to **10** and choose again).

– 24 –

David accepts both the apology and the drink. They get chatting, and the man introduces himself as Viscount James Brigsley. They meet again after the show, and David tells James about Prospecta Oil and its prospects. The very next day, James buys $300,000 worth of shares, which Harvey, when he heard from Bernie Silverman (who had been told in all innocence by David) what was going on, released onto the market. David is playing his part very well, thanks to you. Note somewhere that $300,000 worth of shares have been bought. Harvey is getting even richer. What next? Return to **10** and choose again.

– 25 –

To your alarm, the proprietor of the gallery is none other than the irascible Frenchman! You and David recognize him, but the night club was gloomily lit, and he may not recognize David. You will have to act quickly and blank out that bit of his memory. You don't want his recognition of David to upset a potentially fruitful situation, and anyway it amuses you to do this sort of thing. Are you quick enough? Generate a number. On 1-3, go to **36**; on 4-6, go to **16**.

– 26 –

The next day, David is so hungover that, while he makes it to Robin's club for lunch, he is in no state to impress the doctor with himself or Prospecta Oil. He'd rather not talk at all, in fact, since talking sets off bass drums inside his head. Once lunch is over, return to **10** and choose again.

– 27 –

As far as you or David know, there's nothing to tell between one Harley Street doctor and another. After eliminating the specialists, David plumps for either Dr R Oakley or Dr V Pritchard. Both are general practitioners and could give David the physical check-up he likes to have once in a while. Will he choose Dr Oakley (go to **5**) or Dr Pritchard (go to **14**)?

– 28 –

Stephen will have nothing further to do with David. He feels a niggle in his mind that David has been trying to manipulate him (actually, it was you!). They part on cool terms. What will David do next in his spare time? Auntie May is away on holiday now, and cannot be contacted. Return to **10** and choose again.

–.29 –

David is lucky: he manages to get hold of a returned ticket for the hit musical *Mice*, in which people prancing around the stage in mouse costumes, looking for cheese, are supposed to represent man's eternal quest for self-fulfilment. The actor who plays cheese is especially praised by the critics. Go to **37**.

– 30 –

Paranoia is not a useful neurosis for a devil, but is certainly an occupational hazard. There's nothing fishy or illegal about Prospecta Oil . . . yet. And by now Harvey Metcalfe has disappeared from view: Bernie Silverman is the boss as far as David is concerned. Go to **41**.

– 31 –

David is a fan of American football, and especially of the Boston Bulldogs, who are over in London for a demonstration match against the Chicago Crunchers. He has a couple of strong martinis before the match, to get himself into the mood, and takes a six-pack of New Amsterdam beer into the match with him.

David starts to get rather drunk. You know that the devil who oversees heavy drinking is a bigger devil than you, and couldn't care less for your concerns, only his. You'd prefer David to stop drinking, but is he already out of your control and in the hands of your rival devil? Generate a number. If it is odd, go to **26**; if it is even, go to **8**.

– 32 –

Over coffee, David steers the conver-

sation away from Auntie May's admittedly fine collection of china figurines, and back to Prospecta Oil. 'You know, Dick,' he says, in a man-to-man fashion, 'Prospecta Oil really does offer a fantastic opportunity for investment.' When Dick merely glowers at David, Auntie May chips in: 'Oh, but we couldn't, Davie honey' (David cringes) 'since we're saving all our money for a sweet little house in Boston when we go back – aren't we, Dick?' she adds with a significant glance at her husband. You gather from the vibes that this is a bone of contention between them, and nothing David says can persuade them. He leaves the house in some dejection. Later, he finds that Stephen Bradley has left for a lecture-tour of Italy. Return to **10** and choose again.

– 33 –

You decide to make this more than a tourist trip, and you have David arrange to meet the Minister of Energy in the MPs' restaurant. Over a splendid lunch, David whispers conspiratorially to the minister that Prospecta Oil could be worth investing in. The minister looks around, nods thoughtfully to himself, and then changes the subject. You and David eagerly await developments – but these are not quite what you expect. Prospecta's licence to explore the North Sea is revoked and the company folds. David hopes that Bernie never discovers why this happened. You'll have to face Old Nick; David's lucky not to be facing the Old Bill.

– 34 –

The major Stock Exchanges in London, Tokyo and New York are extremely sensitive to the quality of a company. The appointment of the shady Arnold Klausberg does not inspire them with confidence in Prospecta Oil. Accordingly, the share price fails to rise . . . and Harvey's plan is doomed. As for you, Old Nick will have you overseeing piggy-bank robberies for the next eon or two!



Old Nick himself promotes you to a cushy post overseeing the cauldrons in Hell

– 35 –

To David's horror, but your satisfaction, David goes into work the next Monday to find the office closed down. It emerges that the whole company was a front for a fraud. The geologist's report was a fake, to generate interest in the company, so that share prices rose. Harvey could then sell his worthless shares for a lot of money. Harvey was never directly involved, and cannot be incriminated; Bernie Silverman is nowhere to be found; David realises that he has been used as a pawn – he flees the country, his future bleak.

How many dollars have you, through David, arranged to be spent on Prospecta Oil shares – shares which, when news reaches the City of the company's collapse, are more or less worthless? If you had no success at all, go to **18**; if you had some success, but less than $1,000,000 worth, go to **9**; if you managed to rip-off of $1,000,000, go to **43**.

– 36 –

The Frenchman recognizes David. After a few choice Gallic expletives, he puts up his fists in a boxer's stance. The scene is comical to you, but then you don't feel the pain of David's black eye and bruised abdomen! This incident calls an abrupt halt to David's shopping expedition. Return to **10** and choose again.

– 37 –

During the interval, in the usual crush in the theatre bar, David finds himself being elbowed by a man he had spotted in a private box during the performance. 'Oh, awfully sorry, old chap,' says the man, in what sounds to David's American ears like a parody of upper-class English. 'I say,' continues the stranger, 'can I buy you a drink to apologise?' This looks like a good opportunity to you, but David's instinct to refuse is very strong, since his mother taught him never to accept gifts from strangers. Is it strong enough to overcome your malicious influence? Generate a number. On 1-2, go to **3**; on 3-6, go to **24**.

– 38 –

The owner of the gallery introduces himself as Jean-Pierre Lamanns and hovers near David. As David browses around the shop, Lamanns comments on particular artists and paintings. David chooses a tasteful nude for his bedroom. While the painting is being packed, Jean-Pierre and David chat. Jean-Pierre soon learns what David does and that he would be wise to invest in Prospecta Oil shares. Note somewhere that he buys $200,000 worth of shares.

When Harvey hears that Lamanns's stockbrokers are looking for a substantial block of shares, he promptly releases enough of his own onto the market. Harvey is enjoying himself – like taking candy from a baby, he thinks. Return to **10** and choose a next course of action for David.

– 39 –

To Dick's intense disapproval, when May gets up and leaves the room, David follows her. In the kitchen he tries to talk to her over the shriek of the coffee-grinder, but she insists that all their money is tied up. There is nothing more David can do here. The next day he rings Stephen Bradley in Oxford, only to find that he has left for a long lecture-tour of Italy. Return to **10** and choose again.

– 40 –

David books a seat to see the hit musical *Mice*, in which people prancing around the stage in mouse costumes, looking for cheese, are supposed to represent man's eternal quest for self-fulfilment. The actor who plays cheese is especially praised by the critics. David's seat is booked for 27 February, which is a few weeks away. This leaves you with two options.

(A) You can simply wait for 27 February and go to the theatre then: in this case, go to **37**. (Note that you must do this if this is already the fourth course of action you are pursuing.)

(B) Just this once, you can return to **10**, pursue another course of action, and then, the next time you go to **10**, you can take up the theatre option again. If you do this, you can go straight to **37** (take a note of that location number), when you retake the theatre option. (Note that if you subsequently choose to have dinner with Auntie May, you may not later go to **37** and must abandon the theatre option – this instruction will not make much sense to you now, but it will if you come across the relevant situation.).

– 41 –

David accepts the job of office manager of Prospecta Oil's London office – Prospecta Oil's only office, in fact, but David isn't to know that. This is David's first visit to London, and there are lots of things he wants to do. Top of the list are things like seeing the sights, visiting friends and relatives, and so on.

However, you know that he will not be in London long enough to do all that he wants. Which do you think will create the best opportunities for Harvey's plan to succeed? While you (and David) are mulling over what to do first, David is called into Silverman's office. Go to **15**.

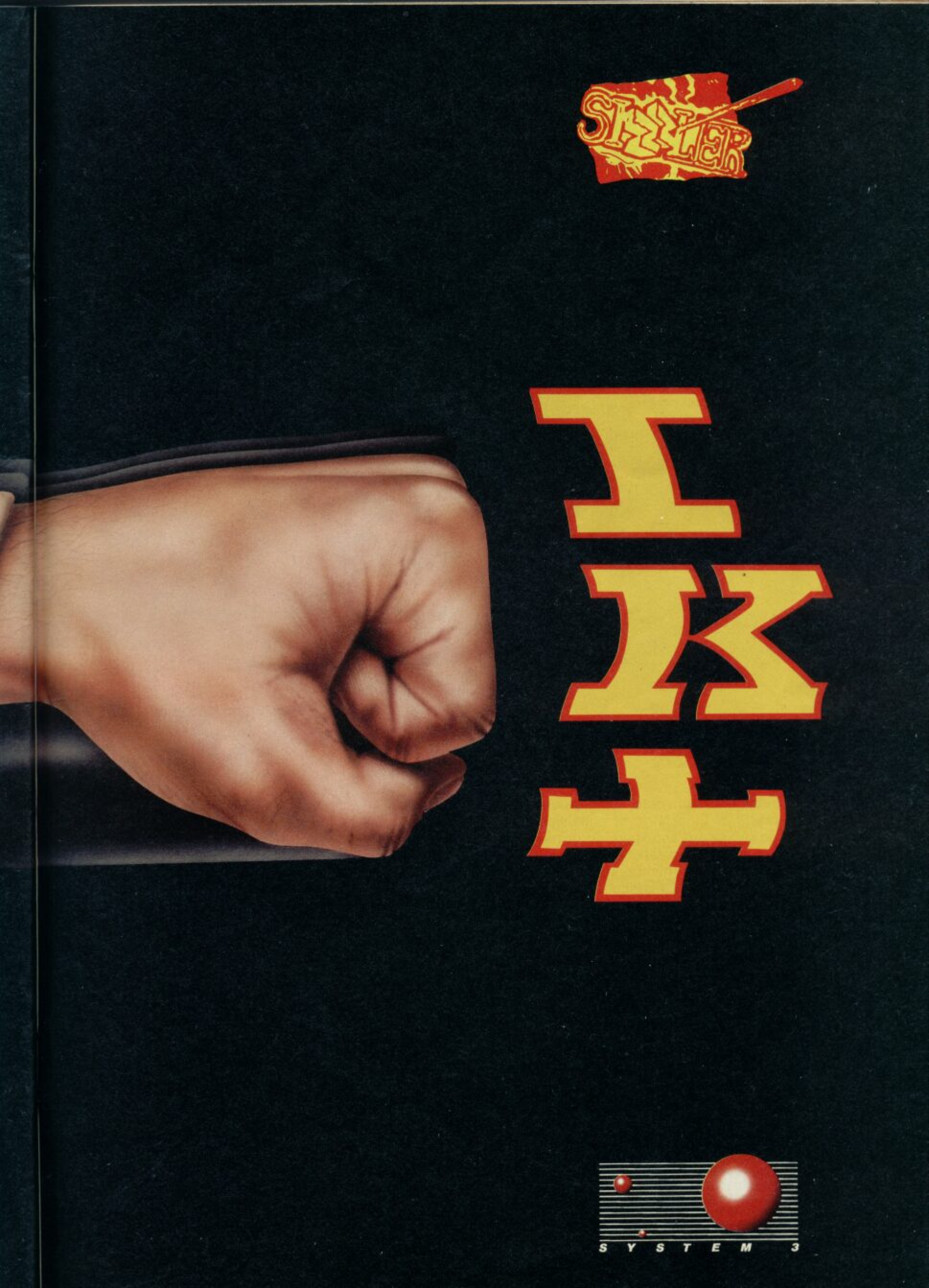
– 42 –

David's Auntie May from Boston married a diplomat whose current posting is London, and he really should pay her a visit at her house in Fulham. On the other hand, there is Stephen Bradley, now a research fellow at Magdalen College, Oxford, who was a friend in David's student days at Harvard. Who will you have David visit: Auntie May (go to **19**) or Stephen Bradley (go to **13**)? If David has been to the theatre, go to **23**.

– 43 –

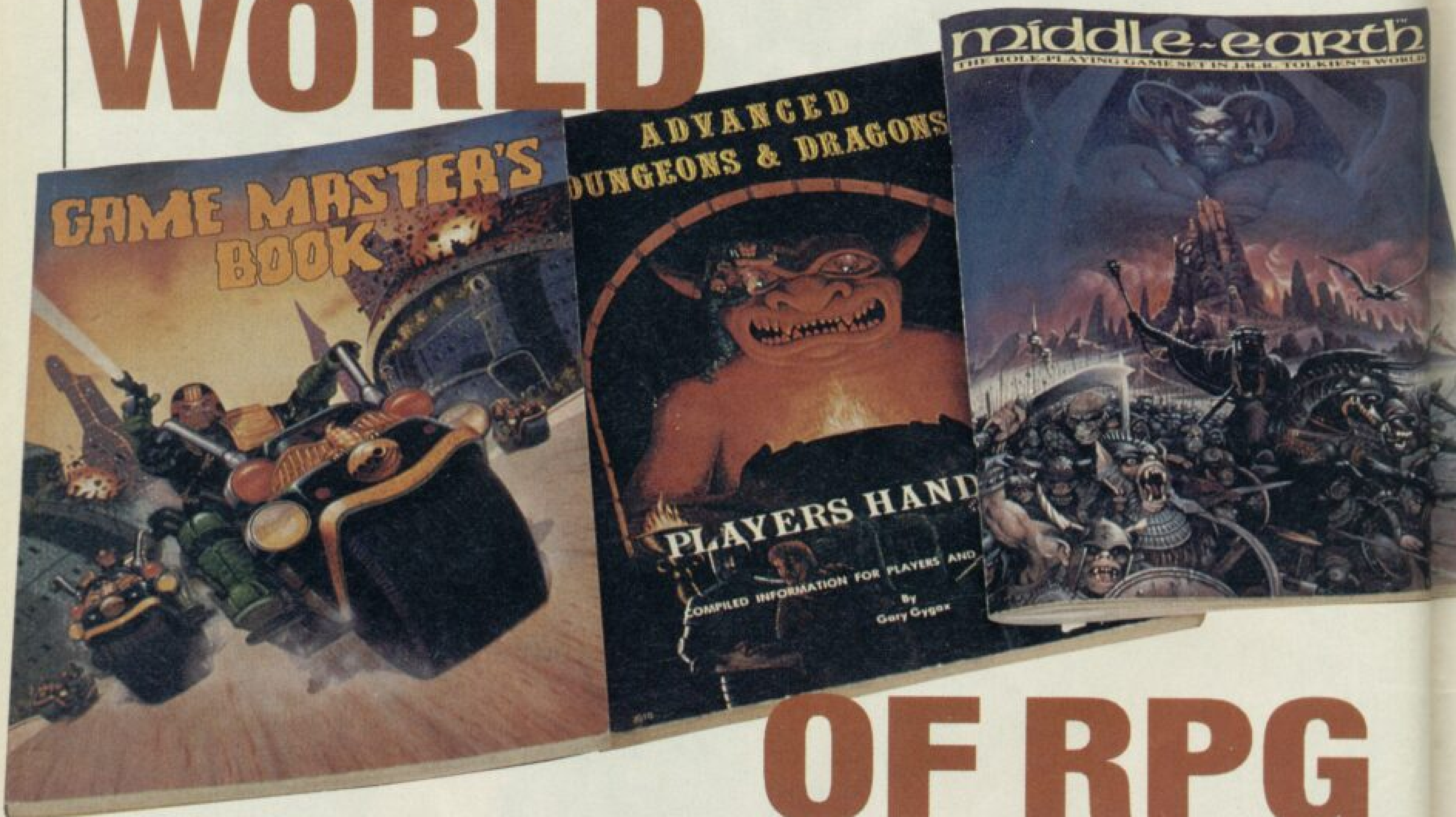
Harvey is delighted. It occurs to him that his dupe, David, found the suckers almost too easily – but then Harvey doesn't know that you lent a hand! Old Nick himself promotes you to a cushy post overseeing the cauldrons in Hell. You have made good, but will Harvey keep his money? Not if Stephen Bradley has anything to do with it, in Domark's computergame version of *Not A Penny More, Not A Penny Less* . . .

THE END OF THE BEGINNING


SIZZLER
IK+
S Y S T E M 3

A long, long time ago, almost before the words 'home' and 'computer' had even been used in the same sentence, something sinister was stirring in a deep, dark dungeon . . .

THE FANTASY WORLD OF RPG



Role-Playing Games first came into being around 1974, and since then hundreds of thousands of enthusiasts have put millions of orcs to the sword and liberated dozens of planets from the clutches of evil Federations. Whilst other gaming crazes have been forgotten, the numbers of role-playing gamers and the range of commercial material available has grown continually over the years. If you've never role-played and some of the abbreviations used in this article are confusing, you may find the section 'What Is A Role-Playing Game?' helpful at this point. If, however, you know your 3D6 from your D10 and an orc from a hobgoblin, read on . . .

John Woods takes a look at some of the best-known Role-Playing Games and explains why they have been so consistently popular for well over a decade.

The first true role-playing game, and the inspiration for all RPGs now in existence, was **TSR Hobbies**'s *Dungeons And Dragons*. This in turn had been developed from single-character wargame rules coded by **TSR** founder **Gary Gygax**, who must therefore go down in history as the inventor of the RPG. Remarkably, D&D and its various expanded versions (Advanced and Expert D&D) remain the single most popular RPG system.

D&D is set in a vaguely-defined fantasy world in which humans coexist with other intelligent species and monstrous beasts drawn from sources ranging from Norse myth to Tolkien. PCs belong to a particular 'character class' – fighter, thief or the unevocatively-named magic user for instance – and this determines their basic abilities. Thus thieves are good at sneaking about, magic users good at casting spells, and fighters good at . . . well, fighting.

As their adventuring career progresses, PCs gain experience points by finding treasure and defeating enemies. Sufficient of these increases their experience level, resulting in an improvement in their skills. The combat system is straightforward – characters and monsters have hit points which are lost when injured. When none are left, the character dies.

The overall feel of D&D is very simple, the only complicating factor being the need for frequent reference to tables to determine the results of combat and other actions. This can spoil the game atmosphere: 'Let's see . . . Gandalf as an . . . um . . . twelfth-level magic user needs . . . uh . . . five or more to hit the troll'.

This simplicity was well-suited to a typical early RPG scenario, which was very much of the dungeon bashing type. Players would usually find themselves exploring an underground complex of rooms and caves populated by a bizarre collection of monsters which often had no compelling reason for their existence. But though simplistic, gaming of that sort could still be great fun and D&D was a rapid success. The range of material continues to expand today, with a very large selection of often excellent prewritten adventures and a long (in my opinion too long) list of rulebooks. D&D is also making its way onto computer, **SSI** have licensed the game and plan to bring out both computerised gameplay aids (to

replace some of those tables) and a role-playing type game.

OUT OF THE CLOSET

After a year or two underground, RPGers left the dungeon and games started to appear set in an enormous variety of worlds. Just as D&D had drawn inspiration from fantasy fiction, some new RPGs were based in science fiction. The first of these to take off was **Game Designer's Workshop**'s *Traveller* (or *Traveler* in the States), which allowed players to trade in their broadswords for blasters and explore a futuristic galaxy.

In contrast to D&D, which let the GM choose the setting of his or her game at will, *Traveller* included highly-detailed background material as well as rules. There are a lot of advantages to this approach, since it allows an adventure to be set in a universe of great complexity without requiring the GM to spend weeks preparing background material, yet doesn't prevent an inventive GM from using self-created material if preferred. This wealth of detail, combined with a simple rules system and a very large selection of commercial supplements and adventures, has kept *Traveller* in position as the most popular game of its type.

CHARACTER ABILITIES

There are several other excellent games inspired by the *Star Wars/ EE Doc Smith* school of SF, but none has become vastly successful. Of note are *Space Opera*, whose highly detailed rules system permitted virtually any SF idea to be incorporated, but which was just too complex for most gamers, and **Chaosium**'s *Ringworld*, an excellent RPG translation of Larry Niven's series of the same title.

. . . humans coexist with other intelligent species and monstrous beasts drawn from sources ranging from Norse myth to Tolkien.

At the same time that *Traveller* was becoming popular, other fantasy-based RPGs were emerging to challenge D&D. Many have long since been forgotten, but the handful of survivors still around today includes **Flying Buffalo**'s *Tunnels And Trolls* – best known for its solo adventure – and my own personal favourite fantasy RPG, *RuneQuest*. This has had a fairly complex history; created originally by Chaosium, it is currently produced under licence by **Avalon Hill**, who have in turn licensed the UK rights to **Games Workshop**.

The original *RuneQuest* was set firmly in Greg Stafford's unusual and enormously-detailed fantasy world of Glorantha. Much excellent commercial material was available for the setting, including possibly the best campaign pack of all time, *Griffin Mountain*. The current printing of the rules has moved from Glorantha into a fantasy Roman Europe. But in spite of the change, the underlying rules system has altered very little. Its great strength lies in the system used to detail character abilities. Any character can be skilled in any field, be it spell casting, weapon use or potion brewing, and skills increase through experience in a much more realistic way than D&D's Level system. Rules are structured in a way that makes additions and alternatives very simple, so *RuneQuest* is an ideal system for those who wish to set a campaign in their own fantasy world. The range of prewritten adventures in print at the moment is much smaller than in the past, but is expanding again fast.

PRESS ANY KEY

WHAT IS A ROLE-PLAYING GAME?

Role-playing games will be familiar to most readers of THE GAMES MACHINE. But if you have somehow escaped their influence, here's an outline of what all the fuss is about, and some explanations.

RPGs can be played by any number from two upwards, with the best size for a group being around four to eight people. Unlike other games there is no deck of cards and no board. Instead of competing against each other to determine winners and losers, the players participate in a dramatic adventure set in almost any time and place they care to imagine – a quest for treasure in a Tolkien-like world of goblins, dragons and magic; a battle against the perps of Megacity One alongside Judges Dredd and Anderson; an investigation of ghostly apparitions in Victorian London; or the exploration of a newly-discovered planet in the far reaches of the galaxy.

One of the players has the crucial job of being referee (usually known as the **Games Master** or GM) who creates the setting of the story that is to take place and determines the subsequent progress of the adventure, according to both a preplanned plotline and what the other players attempt to do. The rest of the group take the roles of particular beings within the game – warriors, warlocks, samurai, space marines, superheroes or whatever. These **Player Characters** or PCs (meaning characters controlled by the players rather than the GM) usually form a group that cooperates to achieve some common goal rather than competing against one another.

Each player has a written record (**character sheet**) describing the abilities and skills of their PC as specified in the rules of the particular RPG in use. These abilities determine such characteristics as the strength and intelligence of a PC, his/her/its skill at fighting or jumping or piloting a spaceship and so on. The initial skills of a PC are usually determined randomly as laid down in the **character generation** section of the rulebook, but if a PC has survived previous adventures the sill levels will have been improved by experience.

The GM starts the adventure by describing to the players where the PCs find themselves and usually by giving some sort of introduction to lead them into the action: 'You hear a rumour that a great treasure hoard is hidden somewhere in the mountains', perhaps, or the even more subtle: 'Suddenly you are surrounded by 20 fully-armed space marines . . . they look kinda angry . . . ' From then on, each player tells the GM what his or her PC is trying to do. The GM decides whether they succeed or fail in any given action by a combination of common sense, artistic licence and occasional reference to the rulebook.

The GM also takes the role of any other beings they run into along the way, these being known as NPCs (*non-player characters*). How this all works out is best seen by example – see 'Sample Of Play'. The game continues in this way until the session is brought to an end by the final success or failure of the group's quest, or by the coming of morning or opening time. Surviving PCs go on to adventure again another day, perhaps with new skills and possessions gained through their endeavours.

The only items needed to play an RPG are a copy of the rulebook, pens and paper for record keeping and a handful of those funny many-sided dice. Only the GM really needs to be familiar with the full game rules, but other players may want their own copy. Many games have separate rulebooks for players and GMs. Other optional extras are miniature metal figures and floorplans to represent characters and scenery, and luxuries such as preprinted character sheets. There are also a large number of prewritten adventures and scenarios available for all the popular rules systems, and these can be a real boon for busy or lazy GMs. The quality of these adventures varies greatly, but many of them are truly excellent.

SAMPLE OF PLAY

To give some idea of the feel of an RPG, here's a brief extract from a typical game session. The setting is that of *Call Of Cthulu*. Daphne, Reggie and Batty (played by Sarah, Peter and Tony) are three intrepid explorers who have been contacted by the enigmatic Professor Magister (an NPC controlled by the GM). He has told them of a long-lost temple devoted to an unknown god and has given Reggie an ancient amulet supposedly associated with the temple. Spurred on by the hope of adventure, fame and fortune our three heroes have accompanied the Professor to the South American jungle. As they have progressed slowly towards their goal, Reggie has been increasingly troubled by vivid nightmares about a many-tentacled monster . . .

GM: After another two hours of hacking your way through the jungle, the Professor calls a halt. The heat and humidity are more overpowering than ever.

Tony (as Batty): 'My God, Reggie, is there no end to this jungle?'

GM (as Professor): 'According to my calculations, the temple should be within a few hundred yards of here.'

Sarah: Daphne looks around carefully.

GM: (Rolls dice) She catches sight of a strangely-shaped stone figure sticking out from the undergrowth.
Sarah (as Daphne): 'I say, chaps, look over there!'

Peter: Reggie makes his way towards it.

GM: As you approach, you see the figure is exactly like the strange amulet. **(Rolls dice)**

Tony (as Batty): 'Careful, Reggie! I smell a rat!'

GM (maliciously): Reggie, distracted by Batty's shout you fail to notice a concealed pitfall ahead of you. You fall about ten feet into darkness.

Sarah (as Daphne): Reggie! Eeek!'

GM (to Peter): As you start to pick yourself up, you hear a distant slithering sound.

Peter (as Reggie): 'My God! The tentacles . . . '

(Many scenes of unspeakable horror ensue).

'TWIXT AND 'TWEEN

An honourable mention in the list of less successful fantasy games must go to the feudal *Chivalry And Sorcery* from **Fantasy Games Unlimited**, which still has a small but fanatical band of devotees attracted by the comprehensive rules system. More popular, though still a minority game, is **ICE**'s *Middle Earth Role-Playing* – an RPG recreation of Tolkien's *Lord Of The Rings* world with a large selection of supplements providing great detail of places such as Moria and Isengard. It polarises Tolkien fans into those who love it and those who view it as blasphemous!

Finally, a relative newcomer to the fantasy market is **Games Workshop**'s *Warhammer Fantasy Role-Play* which I've given a more detailed review of elsewhere.

For a long time the RPG market divided simply into fantasy and 'hard' SF games. But nowadays there are many that fall into neither category. I've only space to mention a few, so apologies if your favourite isn't listed!

First to appear were games set in realistic historical settings – *Bushido* and *Flashing Blades* are **FGU**'s games of Imperial Japan and France of the Three Musketeers respectively. Then came a whole range of superhero games in which players could masquerade as their favourite comic hero(ine) in their fight against crime – *Marvel Superheros* and *Champions*, for instance.

In a slightly different category comes **Games Workshop**'s wonderful *Judge Dredd* – a real must for fans of the *2000 AD* comic-strip, and anyone else who enjoys the idea of dispensing justice in a futuristic city with a unique blend of violence and sardonic wit. Incidentally, Games Workshop was set to convert *Judge Dredd* into a computer game but their hasty exit from software production stopped it, and eventually the licence went to **Melbourne House**

. . . the thrill of playing a really good Cthulu scenario has to be experienced to be believed.

CHAOS AND PARANOIA

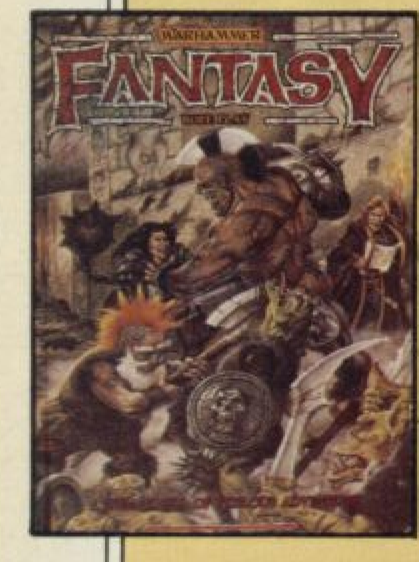
Two other games defy categorisation but must be included in any listing of today's success stories. First of these is **Chaosium**'s atmospheric *Call Of Cthulu*, based on the strange writings of HP Lovecraft. In the game, dark forces of horrible power are latent within the world, and players take the roles of unsuspecting investigators who stumble upon their manifestations. Originally set in America of the Twenties, supplements are now available for other times and places. To maintain Lovecraft's sinister atmosphere requires a high degree of GM skill, but the thrill of playing a really good Cthulu scenario, as your character's sanity is gradually undermined, has to be experienced to be believed. The prewritten adventures for this game are amongst the best around.

Last but not least in this whistle-stop tour of today's RPGs comes *Paranoia* from **West End Games**. Described as 'a role-playing game of a darkly humorous future', it's not for those who become fond of their PCs! Troubleshooters for the computer that runs the Alpha Complex – a colony of survivors of a future holocaust – trouble is what they invariably find, and shot is what they usually get. Fortunately, computer game-style, each character has five clones available in case of rapid demise, and these are frequently needed. Fear and Ignorance are the keywords for *Paranoia* referees, and a skillful GM can soon have the players mistrusting each other even more than their hostile surroundings and the insane computer. *Paranoia* is great fun, unique, and a real antidote to over-serious gaming.

SIMPLE OR COMPLEX

So why have RPGs been such a success story? I suppose a prime reason must be the general feeling of fun a gaming session generates. With no winners or losers, players can forget competition amongst themselves and just immerse themselves in the game's atmosphere. For the players, and especially for the GM, an RPG gives a chance to be creative in an informal way, to put on funny voices and to escape into a fantasy adventure in a world that they have themselves shaped. And unlike most games, they can be as simple or complex as you like and can be played for any length of time from a few minutes upwards. There's no board to set up and no disk or cassette to load!

So to all of you who have never tried role-playing, why not find some friends who are interested and give it a go? You have nothing to lose but your hit points!



WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY

Games Workshop
£14.95 for hardback rulebook (366pp)
Supplements from around £6.95

Games Workshop have in the past been best known for their UK editions of other companies' RPGs, such as *RuneQuest* and *Paranoia*. But they write their own rules too, of which *Judge Dredd* RPG is a supreme example. *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* (WHFRP) is not a brand-new release, but as it has yet to become fully-established, and will appeal to many beginners, I feel it is worth reviewing here.

The appearance of the rules is excellent, with everything you need both to play and GM the game contained in a heavy, well-illustrated hardback. The use of imaginative typefaces adds to the overall quality, which is only marred by a number of silly typos – get a proof-reader Games Workshop!

The rules themselves have evolved directly from GW's *Warhammer* fantasy wargaming system, and are compatible with it. So your favourite character can adventure independently or, if you have both games, lead armies into pitched battles. However, this has meant that the rules system of WHFRP is rather more simplistic than one might expect for a modern game, owing more to D&D than to say *RuneQuest* or MERP.

Characters improve their skills by gaining experience points which allows them to advance in ways determined by their chosen career. Thus a PC who is a physician may improve intelligence or dexterity, or learn healing and drug-making skill. This sounds good in principle, but soon becomes unrealistic in play: 'I want to improve my initiative, so I'll become a highwayman!'

The combat system, too, is simplistic, with characters being either alive or dead instead of being gradually injured. And the magic spells available to character magicians don't seem well thought out – the magic system has a tacked on feel to it.

The best part of the rules for me is the background setting, which is a cleverly twisted version of medieval Europe. This has the advantage that players have some historical feel of the environment, but the GM isn't restricted by historical accuracy.

A number of adventure supplements are currently available, with each forming part of a continuing campaign. The two I've played, *The Enemy Within* and *Shadows Over Bogenhafen* have been excellent in their detail and physical quality, but rather lacking in scope for skillful play – the PCs have little choice but to be swept along by the events, and there's little help for the GM if the players want to try something unusual.

In conclusion: probably not a system with much to offer the experienced RPGer, but straightforward and detailed enough to give good value to beginners or those moving into RPGs from wargaming. The rulebook has a rushed feel to it, with some sections ill-organised and several misprints. Worth a look, especially if availability of good value, uncomplicated scenarios is important to you.

HEAVENS ABOVE

(There's a Benny Hill in my dish)

Mel Croucher ponders on the satellite TV revolution

Forget Ronnie Raygun's Star Wars project, the battle in space has been going on for several years, and the latest High Frontier is being fought for in the skies over Britain right now. Satellite television is about to revolutionise our TV screens in exactly the same way as the rest of Northern Europe. If you hop across to Amsterdam or Paris or Dusseldorf or Copenhagen, you will be amazed at the nonchalance of European teleheads, as they flick from the UK football results to the world news live from Atlanta, to the latest pop videos, to a dose of soft porn, to the Big Race at Longchamps, to *Doctor Who*, to the Moscow Philharmonic, to *Beverly Hills Cop 2*, to an Optrex eye-bath and a couple of Anadins. Meanwhile, back in the Third World of Andover or Pontefract or Dundee or Coventry, we gloomily discover that there's nothing worth watching on the telly yet again, and slouch off in the rain for a pint of gnat's pee.

Our European neighbours have a choice of up to 65 channels beaming down from the skies, and countries like Holland and Belgium already offer up to 17 choices, including ITV, BBCs One and Two and Channel 4. Meanwhile, over in the States, up to 32 channels are on offer. A wise man, probably myself, once said that we used to have the choice between garbage on BBC and dross on ITV, but with the advent of satellite television we've got the choice of garbage from Europe and dross from the USA. (On second thoughts, maybe Harold Wilson said that.) But this attitude is very simplistic. The choice is incredibly varied, and these days it is almost impossible *not* to find something of interest being beamed down at us 24 hours a day.

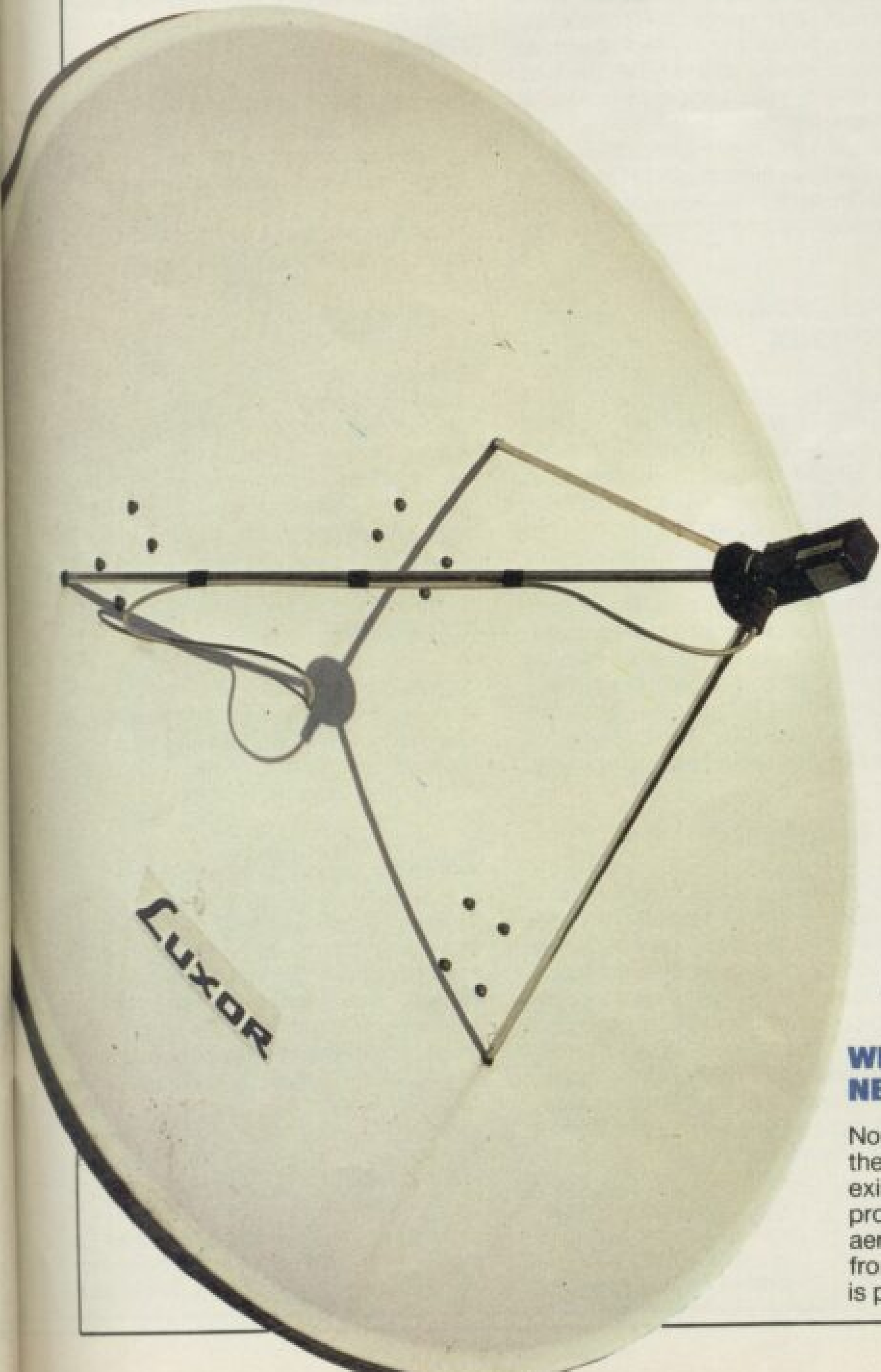
. . . we've got the choice of garbage from Europe and dross from the USA.

WHAT ON EARTH IS SATELLITE TV?

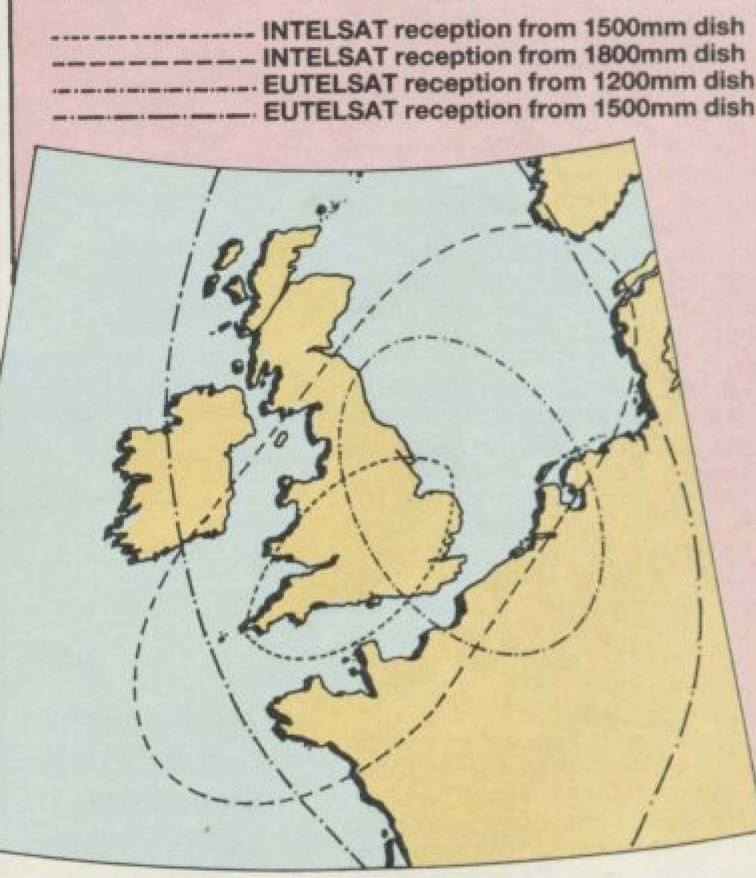
Good question. The answer is, it's not on Earth at all. Unlike ground station transmissions and cable networks, STV broadcasts audio and video signals from geostationary satellites (bits of hardware in fixed-position orbits.) There are two of these satellites which concern us, INTELSAT VF-11, and the equally catchy named EUTELSAT ECS F-1.

WHO CAN RECEIVE THE SIGNALS?

You can, mate, unless you live in the west of Ireland, in which case you'll need a receiving dish the size of a cartwheel and a reinforced roof. Take a look at Figure One to see where you fit in, and many congratulations to the inhabitants of Cambridgeshire who appear to be laughing all the way to early blindness.



ARE YOU RECEIVING ME?



WHAT HARDWARE DO I NEED?

Not a lot. Your existing TV will show the pictures and play the sounds. Your existing video will record the programmes. Because your existing aerial is designed to pick up signals from ground-based transmitters, and is pointed at the nearest tower block, mountain or rose bed, you will need a receiving dish pointed at the sky and plugged in to your aerial socket on the TV or video. You will also need a little black box to unscramble certain channels, because a load of spoilsports and breadheads have decided to encode their transmissions and charge you for the privilege of decoding them.

WHAT WILL IT COST ME?

I wish I could tell you, but the answer to this little poser is a bit complex. I know a young gent who has built his own satellite dish and decoder for £293 (including VAT), from a boxful of components that he bought from an electronic store. On the other hand, I also know a rich moron who went out and spent one and a half grand on a poncy system which performs very well indeed.

Readers of THE GAMES MACHINE, being a discerning bunch of people, would probably opt for an off-the-shelf system retailing at about £425 (plus VAT). Chances are that within two years there will be 50 channels on tap, Amstrad will be flogging dishes and decoders for £199, and some smartarse will be advertising in the small ads of computer mags the circuit diagrams of a do-it-yourself decoder and a dustbin-lid-to-satellite-dish conversion for a fiver.

You will also need a special licence to receive STV, although disguising your receiving dish as a circular roof cat would overcome this. But don't panic, your Post Office should have Licence Form TVRO, and it only costs ten quid FOR LIFE! (Buy now before government loonies wise up.).

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Quite a lot really. Firstly, just like the early days of television, and then video, there are a load of cowboys and rip-off merchants out there, who will try and exploit the would-be STV viewer. You don't need their advice. Honest. If you can't work out where to site your receiving dish, and how to plug the cable into your aerial socket, then you are reading the wrong magazine. Try *The Beano*, or if that's too hard, *The Daily Telegraph*.

Depending on where you live, optimum reception will be with your dish angled between 25° and 30°, and pointing 27½° degrees west of due south (Intelsat), or 13° east of due south (Eutelsat).

Those clever Japanese chaps have just come out with a flat dish receiver, complete with all the electronic hardware built in, which picks up anything from cruise missile bus routes to *The Benny Hill Show*, thanks to armchair steering for its angle of dangle. A price of £225 is being seriously discussed for the near future, but I've got this strange little noise in my head that sounds something like 'MSX-MSX-MSX', which I can't quite explain.

Some greedy folks will try and get you to pay extra for watching their discharges from heaven, and no doubt several thousand hackers and boffins will attempt to change the rules of the game. Other greedy folk will let you watch for free, and instead make you suffer great wadges of advertising every ten minutes. Certain folk will not be greedy, and invite you to view their channels absolutely free. These are the ones to watch out for as they are without exception religious fanatics, perverts, government agencies, insufferable bores or all four.

. . . a load of spoilsports encode transmissions and charge you for the privilege of decoding them.

WHO B WHAT?

EUTELSAT CHANNELS
Super Channel/Musicbox
Sky Channel
Europa
TV5
Filmnet
Teleclub
Sat-1
RAI-Uno
RTL (East Spot)
World Net
WPN
3-Sat
Visnews

INTELSAT CHANNELS
Lifestyle
Premiere
Screen Sport
The Children's Channel
The Arts Channel
MTV Europe
CNN (Cable New Network)
Intelfax
Reuters

Okay, you've got a few facts, a few more figures and you've already done my pithy little Trivia Quiz inside the Back Cover; what you need now is an unbiased review of the STV channels available in your very own home, at this very moment in the space-time continuum. How can I refuse you? So here it is, the ultimate guide to satellite entertainment, free from flavourings, preservatives and artificial colouring. Almost.

SUPERCHANNEL – MUSICBOX

Owned by Robert the Fat Man Maxwell, and sundry other opportunists, Superchannel is a bit like a British timewarp. Archive stuff like *Fawlty Towers*, *Doctor Who*, *Allo Allo*, *Blakes 7*, *Emerdale Farm*, *Jim'll Fix It* and *The Muppets* is balanced by prerelease pop videos which don't arrive in the UK for yonks. The illusion of timewarp is completed by hour-long bulletins of the ITN News. Movies tend to be the sort of blockbuster and box-office hits that are in the video rental Top Twenty. *The Benny Hill Show* pollutes the airwaves regularly.

SKY CHANNEL

Funded by Rupert Dirty Murdoch, and right now the most popular satellite channel in Europe. Unbelievable amounts of crummy Australian soaps dominate the scheduling, closely followed by unbelievable amounts of crummy American soaps. Serials, movies and sport make up the rest of the output, and Sky is the downmarket equivalent of Murdoch's crummy newspapers.

EUROPA

Difficult to comment on this one, as it doesn't seem to be broadcasting at the moment. Lovely little logo though.

TV-5

French language upmarket service, generously ladled with international news. Half decent music programmes and half indecent entertainment shows. I can't think of a better way to learn the language and habits of our garlicky neighbours.

FILMNET

Continual movies laced with a bit of sport, almost all with English soundtracks and Dutch subtitles. Adventurous scheduling often provides superb entertainment. Most titles are reasonably up to date. Recommended, and it's 24 hours a day.

TELECLUB

Swiss-German movie channel, which is really interesting for all the Swiss-German movie fans among us. Also favours soft porn, which is really interesting to some others.

SAT-1

Twin channel German output. One provides the usual ITV-type mix of entertainment, sports coverage and news, the other attempts to entertainment, sports coverage and news, the other attempts to entertain the American Occupying Forces, and fails.

RAI-UNO

The Italian equivalent to BBC-1, soaps, news, sport, movies and some of the most amazing game shows you

BROADCASTS

will ever suffer. As it's state run, you will be denied the dubious pleasure of watching the amteur porno much loved by Italian pirate broadcasters.

RTL (EAST SPOT)

From the makers who brought you good ol' Radio Luxembourg, this French language station broadcasts for about five hours a day, and is extremely missable.

WORLD NET

The very worst form of American Religious holy-roller garbage, of the 'send us $100 or you'll burn in the bottomless pit' variety. Bloody hell!

WPN

Equally horrific American garbage, this time pumped out by the State Department. Eight hours a day of Yank propaganda of the most sickening kind. The saddest thing of all is that it is presented as 'news'. Probably the shape of things to come, once all governments turn on to the satellite phenomenon.

3-SAT

German-based 'serious' channel, with in-depth news and analysis, and the occasional entertaiment programme that slips in by mistake. Recommended if you want to learn German, not recommended if you want to stay awake.

VISNEWS

Very interesting indeed, a rough and ready hash of unedited global news reports, hitting the screen as it comes in, and before any editors, censors and producers can get their grubby little hands on it. Highly recommended.

Premiere is the justification for installing your satellite system on its own . . .

LIFESTYLE

WH Smith's enforcement of everything sexist for the captive 'housewife'. Morning to late afternoons filled with rubbish about clothes, cookery, orgasms etc.

PREMIERE

THE movie channel par excellence! Unbelievably good choice of titles, including current releases, back catalogue classics and, as the channel's own name implies, simultaneous box office new releases. Premiere is justification for installing your satellite system on its own, let alone all the other channels available! It is worth listing this weeks's schedule, just to get you drooling: *Nightmare On Elm Street 2 (Freddy's Revenge), Commando, Agnes Of God, Clue, A Chorus Line, Tranysylvania 65000, Dream Lover, Wise Blood, Jake Speed, Knights Of The City, Beverly Hills Cop 2*, and more, and more . . . yowzah!

SCREEN SPORT

When WH Smith have finished turning women's minds into pudding, they call themselves Screen Sport from 6pm to one in the morning, and try to turn men's minds into pudding. Worldwide international sports, big matches, tiddlywinks, you name it, they mangle it.

THE CHILDREN's CHANNEL

Non-stop hardcore porn, er, sorry, wrong spot on my tuner, um, nine hours a day of appallingly bad cartoons, patronising drivel and pathetic pre-teen pop videos. Due to some weird aberration, the most wonderful natural history features manage to save the day. On second thoughts, no they don't.

THE ARTS CHANNEL

Excellent stuff. Top quality concerts ranging from electronic music to symphony orchestras. Ballet, opera, jazz, hip-hop, cinema, tour news, interviews. Due to the fact that the world is run by morons, this channel only broadcasts from 6am to 9am. Makes you want to weep tears of battery acid.

MTV EUROPE

Lavatory-scraping stuff. Poor quality concerts ranging from bubblegum to heavy metal, interspersed with vapid vid-jokes. Pomp rock, wimp rock, schlock rock, cock rock, tour news, interviews. Due to the fact that the world is run by morons, and MTV Europe is run by Robert Maxwell & Co., this channel broadcasts 24 hours a day. Should carry a Health Warning.

CNN

Live round-the-clock news service from Atlana USA. Many of you will already have got a taste for the brash, simplistic but largely accurate and unbiased reporting, on the new late night link up on ITV.

INTELFAX AND REUTERS

Both London-based electronic equivalents to their City and News Agency businesses. Yuppy delight.

The Editor would like to point out that the views expressed in the above analysis of STV stations are those of Mr M Croucher and all law suits should be directed towards him. He will then tear them up because his analysis is remarkably true.

THE FUTURE

Technical Predictions

Everyone will go satellite eventually. Next year 600mm dishes will arrive which work as well as the existing monsters. By 1990 you'll be able to pick up a little satelite dish and a simple plug-in box from most TV suppliers, and STV rental will become common. Within five years, dirt cheap, flat-dish receivers will flood the market, capable of receiving anything being broadcast, and the Japanese will clean up yet again.

Many more satellites will be launched, and squillions of channels will fight for broadcast space in the heavens. This fight will not be particularly difficult, because heaven has got plenty of space. Pirate channels will broadcast all sorts of deviations and home grown wonders, and governments will try to jam the signals. Clever pirates will retaliate by encoding automatic channel switching, and hijacking official channels. A splendid time will be had by all.

Social Predictions

Maybe we'll all go blind, or mad, or fall asleep. Maybe we'll still head off in the rain towards the nearest pint of gnat's pee. Many myths will be exploded, as Ivan sits down to *Dallas* and Chuck sits down to *Teléjournal*. Propaganda, pornography and censorship will battle it out, as ever, but much more important changes will happen. *Live Aid* proved that, television can link the whole world if power changes to Action. This year the Intelsat is being used to train 5,000 doctors all over South America. As I write this, Intelsat is being used to wheel and deal in armanents, some of which will undoubtedly end up blowing the legs of the very South Americans that those doctors will have to treat.

Technology is neutral. Information is power . . . power will be in the hands of whoever owns the Channels . . .

Technology is neutral. Information is Power. The way Satellite Television is going, power will be in the hands of whoever owns the Channels; the Robert Maxwells, the Rupert Murdocks, the Richard Bransons, the Church of the Come Again Stormtroopers of Saint Samantha, the KGB, the BBC, Tescos, but power will also be in the mouths of Jonathon Woss, President Wogan, Sir Alistarkstairingbonkers, Bananarama and Sooty the Bear. What do you say Sooty? Really! Honest? No kidding . . . hmm, thought so, Sooty says he can't wait for all this to happen, and after deep thought and a Dunhill International Luxury Length, neither can I. Now what's on the box tonight . . . ? Bluddyell, I'm off out in the rain for a pint of gnat's . . .

GREMLIN GRAPHIC'S ALTERNATIVES



WIN . . . AN AWFUL LOT . . .

'Over to you Harry . . . '

'Thank you David. Good evening everybody and welcome to a packed venue. As you join us, the main event is just about to start and it promises to be a cracker of a competition with the spoils for the winner set very high indeed. The crowd, obviously thrilled at being here, settles down now as best it can to enjoy what surely must be classed as one of the greatest highlights in the history of sport as we know it. With the event sponsored by **Gremlin Graphics** and THE GAMES MACHINE about to start, we say, 'sit back and enjoy the *Alternative World Games* Competition' . . . How was that, David?'

'Very good, Harry. Why don't you carry on?'

'Thank you David, I will. Well here we are again, and the items included in the first prize are lining up now . . . under starters orders . . . AND THEY'RE OFF! The Football and set of Goalie's Gloves (a good all rounder with no indication of being all fingers and thumbs) surge forward at an incredible pace, although the Booted Roller Skates (bearing up nicely) are coming up fast on the far side . . . The Tennis Racquet with its set of six Balls (trying not to get court out there) is making a very strong effort in third position, but the Badminton Net with Rackets and Shuttlecocks (make up your own amusing ditty!) is a very close fourth.

'Jostling for fifth position we have a set of Flat Green Bowls (toward whom I'm slightly biased), a Table Tennis set (what is that strange pong?) and a Swing Ball Set (just to keep you dangling on the edge of your seat). Behind these, on the inside, a Pair of Trainers (look at those muscles pump) and a Hoola Hoop (trained by Sir Kull) are battling valiantly to gain lost ground. But bringing up the rear (trying not to hang ten back), it's the Skateboard . . . and as they hurtle off into the distance it's back to the studio . . . '

Who's gonna win?? You are, we hope! All these goodies taking part in this Alternative Race are items which TGM and Gremlin Graphics are giving away as the first prize in this competition. For the 25 runners up there are copies of *Alternative World Games* (on various formats) to win. This new game from Gremlin places up to eight players in different world locations competing in what one might call sports with a difference; Sack racing in Naples (italy), boot throwing at the Colosseum (Rome, Italy) and pole climbing in Verona (Italy . . . here, what ever happened to the 'world' bit?) to name but three.

All you have to do to enter this very sporting competition is answer these five simple questions. First correct one out of the bag wins the goodies, next 25 get the game.

1) What is the distance between the penalty spot and the goal mouth (on the same side of the half way line!), in yards, on a full size football pitch?
2) With what sport do you associate John Parrot?
3) Which company wrote the original *World Games*
4) Who hosts 'A question of sport'?
5) In which sport would players Bully Off?

Send your entries on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope to ALTERNATIVE GAMES COMPETITION, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB*. All entries must be with us by 19 December. Don't forget your name and address, and tell us the computer you own. Our usual competition rules apply, check out the masthead if you are in any doubt.



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MICRO ACE
WIZ CARD
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Contact your nearest computer store for details on full range or clip the coupon.
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0262 602541
Access Accepted
Please send me full details
Name
Address
ZZ32

Glitzy image rather than technical innovation is the prime concern of many of the big, and some of the smaller, software houses these days. For THE GAMES MACHINE John Gilbert joins the race for the latest licences to see how they get 'em, what they have to do to get 'em, and what they do with them once they have got 'em.

LICEN 'EM



Each company has a different approach to image. Ocean cuts a tomboy image with *Top Gun*, *Gryzor* and *Combat School*, and Piranha, at the other end of the marketing scale goes for the cutesy look of *Trap Door* but they both use product name as much as programming prowess to rake in the money.

Image building is not an easy business, even for corporations such as Ocean. There are hundreds of films, television programmes and comic book titles appearing every month which you can license. You might be able to spend a few thousand on an old licence such as *Nosferatu*, or a relatively unknown one, such as *Centurions*. Alternatively you may take part in an auction to buy titles like *Star Trek* or *Masters Of The Universe – The Movie* for vast sums, but even then you could bankrupt your company because of the marketing complexities.

RACE AND CHASE

Licensing became an important part of the software industry three years ago when Activision launched *Ghostbusters* on the crest of a giant hype wave. The game was moderately good with a so-so soundtrack, but the computer press lapped up its connection with the hit film and confirmed games players' feelings that a game of the film must be a sure fire success. More than 250,000 copies were sold in four months and it still retains the number one slot in licensing history, although *Top Gun*, from Ocean, is only a tail away.

Activision also took the risk of buying the rights to any *Ghostbusters* sequels that might be made and it looks as though it may have paid off. *Ghostbusters II*, starring Dan Ackroyd, starts production in the States soon and it looks as though it could be another success. Whether the game – which hasn't been officially announced by Activision UK – will be an equal success depends upon how it is marketed.

The industry has got a lot more sophisticated since the *Ghostbusters* days when you could simply tie-in a game to a film and be guaranteed a best seller. Licence prices have rocketed and competition between software giants has become fierce.

The masters of the marketing game, Ocean, arrived on the scene shortly before *Ghostbusters* hit the shelves. The company has made the licensing business profitable by opening it up to other fields of entertainment such as arcade coin-ops, television series and cartoons.

Ocean's early marketing expertise came from managing director and co-founder David Ward. He admits that it was difficult to get film producers and distributors, such as Twentieth Century Fox and Cannon, to take the software industry seriously. Film companies were willing to almost give licences away but were not willing to support computer games with promotions or special guest appearances by stars at software press launches.

Ward had to develop contacts with potential licence outlets, promote a positive image of the size of the software market and keep tags on what was about to appear at cinemas and on television. As more companies joined the chase for licences the race for new material got hotter.

OUTLETS

It's not enough to pick up a licence while a film's in production or an American TV series is being bought by BBC or ITV for transmission in a few months time. You could find, as Ocean did with its first adventure game *Neverending Story*, that the film has passed you by and a passable game becomes a has-been.

Neverending Story was a German-backed film but distributed in the US and UK by Warner, from whom Ocean purchased the rights. By the time Ocean had the rights, decided what the game would look like and put together a programming team the film was almost through its post production-editing-stages. In the following months the film was released in the States and then went on London and Limited provincial release in Britain.

Several months after a full provincial release in the UK, and during an autumn slump in software sales, the game was released. Ocean had no idea that the film had finished its UK tour and the game's less than deserved sales were due mainly to non-cooperation with the film distributor, the adventure game format, and the lousy release date.

Ocean has since learnt by its mistakes. When you're looking for a new product you don't go to a film company's internal hierarchy, such as managing directors or executive producers. Agents, such as public relations companies, are also guaranteed to show ignorance of projects in production and will make sure that you get no information until a film is officially launched.

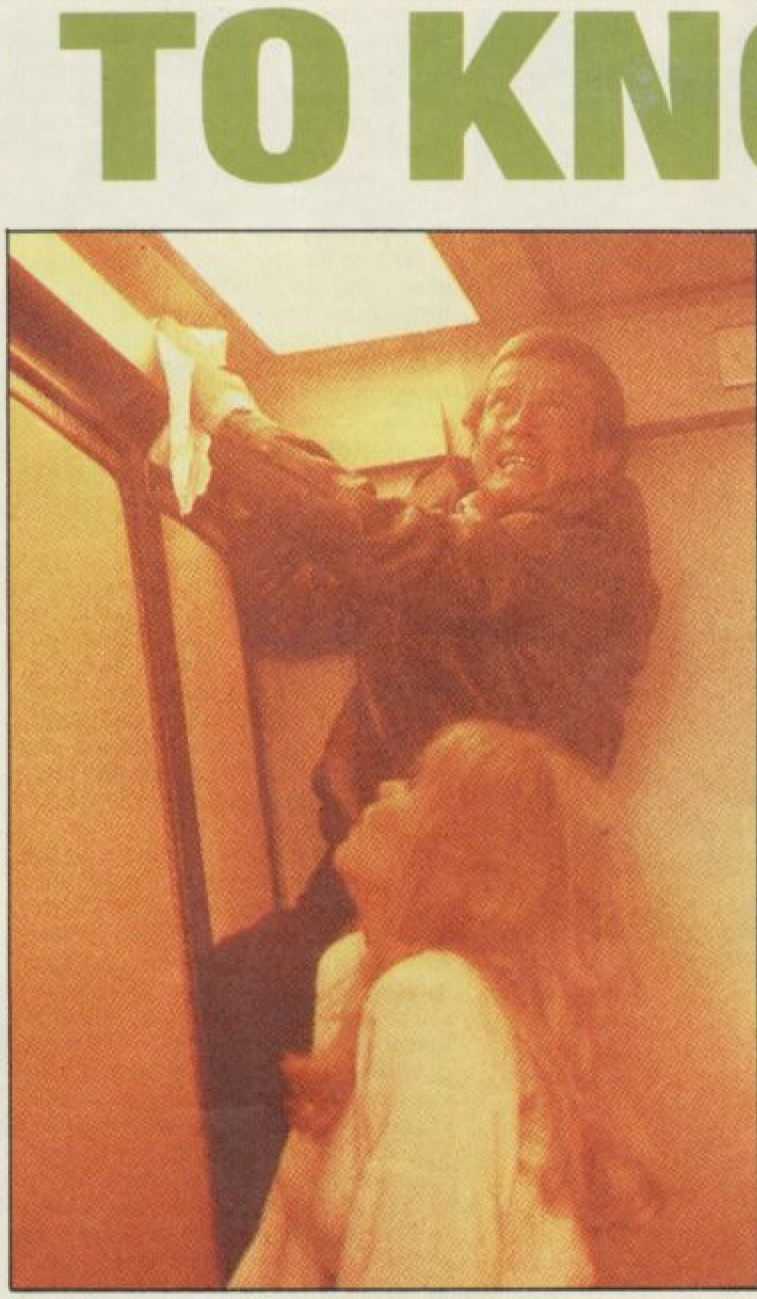
Instead, you can take all the trade and fan papers such as *Screen International*, *Fangoria* in the States and *Starburst* in the UK. Get to know the journalists on those papers, find out who their contacts are and finally get to know the people who really count during the making of a film – writers, directors and maybe even actors. Just one rumour from any of

"Once you've made a nuisance and shown that you won't be put off by PR flannel, the film companies will start offering you new products."

ENSED TO KNOCK DEAD



All right, who said thank God it's Friday?



Roger with moore of his eyebrow ideas

these sources could get you in on a multi-million pound licence deal.

Once you've made a nuisance and shown that you won't be put off by PR flannel or the so-called closed set – where any of the production team found leaking information or pictures from the film set will have their contracts torn up – the film companies will start offering you new products. The companies who are in that position at the moment include Ocean, Activision, US Gold, and Gremlin Graphics, a tight clique if ever there was one.

The best time to have a product offered to you is when the script for a film, or manuscript for a book is being written. Your programmers can use the script to strip out sequences which can be computerised, and the film has not gone into production yet so you'll have at least six months before it premières.

Domark was given the script for *The Living Daylights* at the end of 1986 when the 007 deal was finalised. Designer Richard Naylor took nine stunts from the film and hung them around a core in which gives the player only a few seconds to select weapons for each scenario.

The result looks impressive but, as several reviewers pointed out, if you take the status panel and colourful cassette inlay away what you are left with is a simple shoot-'em-up which could have applied equally well to a vigilante film or any of a dozen spy thrillers. The same can be said for *Death Wish III* and *Cobra*; and while we're at it *Top Gun* is no more than a barely adequate dual-screen flight simulator. I've seen better, but all the games have got those names behind them and very often that guarantees success.

GETTING IT RIGHT

When you negotiate for a movie licence you have the option of buying several different product rights. The most important is the plot, unless you plan to write your own, and this includes the characters within the movie, the way they dress and the way they look.

Once the plot's settled you will want a soundtrack for your game which bears some relationship to the movie. That means paying the composer for the original score and, if you want to include the original theme soundtrack on the tape with the game, the recording artists.

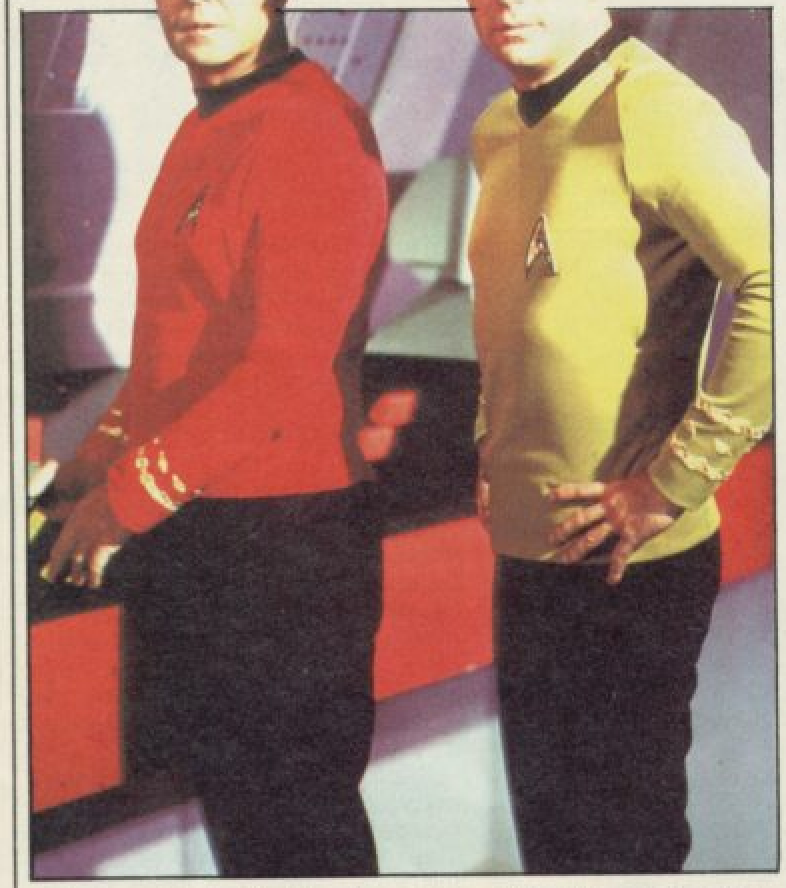
Domark had trouble with the original soundtrack of *A View To A Kill* when the company decided to include the Duran Duran theme on side B of the tape. In 85 the Duranites had a recording contract with Tritec Music in association with EMI. Tritec agreed to allow Simon Le Bon's vocals on the tape but at the last moment asked for 10% of the game's profits. The music company wouldn't back down but the track went on the game and contributed to the financial flop that it quickly became.

You won't find a trace of *The Living Daylights* either in or out of the latest Domark 007, which is a hit by anyone's estimates. Directors Wheatley and Strachan wanted the Monty Norman 007 theme in the game but, according to the official line, the budget didn't stretch to it.

Specialised logos, like those of *Miami Vice, Masters Of The Universe* and *James Bond* must also be bought. Very often they are owned by authors, artists, or agencies other than the film corporation. The Batman logo, for instance, is owned by DC Comics who can dispose of it with

James the Fifth kicking the living daylights out of all and sundry





Kirk 'n' Scott about to change the laws of physics

their character, but the Bond gun logo is a registered trademark of Danjaq SA.

To finalise the main contract you need the film's poster artwork for your cassette inlay and magazine advertising. Consumers are more likely to associate the game with the film if the original artwork is used as in Ocean's *Cobra* campaign and Gremlin's forthcoming *Masters Of The Universe* advertising. For that you have to go back to the original artist, who is likely to be a freelancer.

The route to a finished contract sounds a long one but the film company, like any good book publisher, should be able to act as a front for all the companies concerned in the rights negotiations. One area, however, in which they're unlikely to be able to trade is in the actors and actresses who portray the characters you want in your game. Their careers are handled by agents who can easily destroy negotiations for film rights by declaring that their client's likeness cannot appear in any artwork or on the computer screen. Very often, however, they will be satisfied if they get enough money and an undertaking that their client will have the final okay on his game likeness.

Only ten bucks for a headband? Ah the good old days



Getting the green light from an actor about his game likeness can be a tricky business. The ill-fated *Dr Who And The Mines Of Terror*, which was due to appear in 1985 but has recently been dropped by software house Micro Power, was partly jinxed by persona problems.

Micro Power intended to have the tenth Dr Who, Colin Baker, on the cassette inlay but Baker was a popular Doctor and wanted more money than the software house's budget could stand. As a result the other Doctors were approached, Tom Baker being the favourite. Negotiations broke down and, if the game had ever been published, though it was widely reviewed, the face of Dr Who on the cassette inlay would have been anonymous or non-existent.

On relatively few occasions the characters are more important than the actors playing them and it is the licensing company which has the final say. Such was the case in the long running *Star Trek* saga.

The rights for the original *Star Trek* television series are held by US book publisher Simon and Schuster, a large conglomerate which is in the process of taking over the UK book publishing industry. Beyond Software, (which has recently been disbanded) owned by British Telecom, out-manoeuvred British software houses, such as Piranha, with a bid of more than £50,000. The contract stated that Simon and Schuster should see and agree all aspects of the game, its graphics, sound and packaging. No doubt the buzz of landing such a highly sought after licence displaced any thoughts by Beyond that there might be problems – but there were.

Kirk, Spock, uniform insignia, star ships and even the interior of the Enterprise's bridge all had to come up to Simon and Schuster's perfecto standards; and once, after two years and two programming teams had overhauled and finished the game, the packaging – boxing, instructions and artwork – came under scrutiny. The game is due out at the end of November but, considering it was finished more than three months ago, it has taken two months to get the inlay past the licensee.

Similar problems were experienced by Beyond with *Superman*, by US Gold with *Road Runner* and by Melbourne House with *Judge Dredd*.

COMICS AND COIN-OPS

Movie licences may hold the prestige end of the entertainment software industry but coin-ops and comic book characters, particularly those from *2000 AD*, are cutting the action not far behind.

The major part of Ocean's Christmas line-up is composed of coin-op titles from Konami – *Gryzor* and *Combat School* – and Taito. Coin-op deals are easier to do than film rights because the licence comes as a package including program, logo and, in the majority of cases, artwork. Coin-op manufacturers are also less strict than film companies about the conversion from original product to computer screen and coin-op adaption usually takes two, instead of six months – for a movie – to complete. There's no need for original story boarding or elaborate program design.

There is still, however, some element of risk in choosing a particular coin-op licence for the computer market. Most are developed in the US and Japan where consumer tastes are different to those in Britain.

Ocean has taken the usual risk with its Christmas releases *Gryzor* and *Combat School*; both are at the top of the US coin-op charts but have yet to establish themselves in the UK. David Ward and marketing director Colin Stokes are sure that the games will fill chart spots in Britain and for that reason – and because of all the lurid hype put out about them – they'll also reach the top of the home computer top ten.

Marketing Japanese coin-op conversions is more difficult. The Japanese see their heroes and heroines as petite figures, often with pony tails. Such was the problem with Ocean's *Athena* and the soon to be released sequel *Psycho Soldier*. The lead character is admittedly female but is cute, rather than sexy – something which Ocean just couldn't have. The spunky little game character was, therefore, modelled as a scantily clad Valkyrie on the poster and advertising artwork.

Ocean's approach hasn't always worked with press and public. Several magazines covered up the peeky nipples of *Game Over*'s villainess before she appeared on their advertising pages.

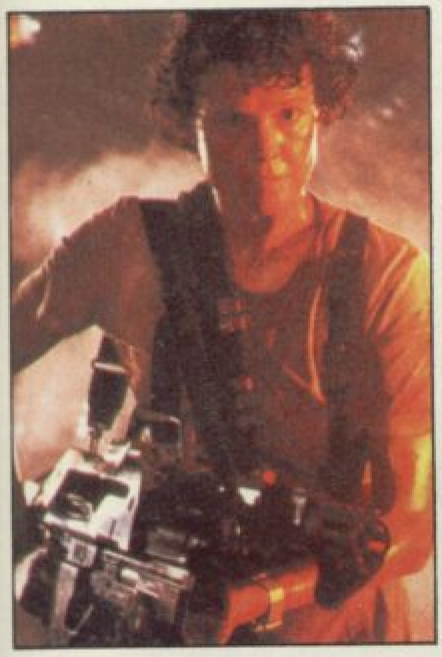
Mastertronic, which doesn't rely on advertising to sell its software, has solved the coin-op licensing problem in a different way. It's looking towards the 16-bit market and has shares in the Arcadia coin-op label.

The Arcadia coin-ops contain Amiga circuit boards so the company dump the machine's code to disk and sell it for home-based Amigas – the perfect home arcade games, and they're the real thing not conversions. Amiga and ST owners can therefore look forward to their own copies of new games, such as *R Type*, almost as soon as they appear in the arcades. It is just a question of time and could happen as soon as Spring 88.

Comic and cartoon licensing took off along a similar track to coin-ops. The heroes were chunky giants in superlump costumes or bulging with muscle. *Transformers*, *Centurions*, *MASK*, and the occasional oddity like *Roland Rat*, hit the racks and for the most part have just as quickly disappeared without causing too much financial distress to the software companies that bought them from the TV stations. The same cannot, however, be said of comic book characters.

Rogue Trooper, Judge Dredd and Nemesis. All these *2000 AD* characters, bar the last one, have come a cropper. The reason is simple.





Taking a swift break from Alien blasting for a quick pose

The characters are little more than cardboard fighting machines but, unlike those you control in the coin-ops you can read about their exploits within the pages of a comic. You can associate with them and when you come to play the games you are let down by creaky animation. Your sense of the real disappears.

Nemesis The Warlock was a success, and in all likelihood *Judge Death* will be, because the manufacturers have concentrated on the technical merit and arcade quality of the games rather than the tie-in with the comic. Rather than *2000 AD*'s Nemesis you have a computer character in its own right with which you can relate.

"Tritec agreed to allow Simon Le Bon's vocals on the tape but at the last moment asked for 10% of the game's profits."

CENSORSHIP

The growth of film and TV licenced products has made retailers such as W H Smith and Boots look to their sales policies. Already Smith is taking survival and vigilante-type magazines down from its shelves and the chainstore has started to fight shy of gory covers – the CRASH featuring Palace's *Barbarian* ran into trouble with some W H Smith branches – and magazine names.

The same is true, though to a lesser extent, of computer games. Already W H Smith has looked at the ethics behind putting games such as CRL's *Jack The Ripper* (see Previews, pages 15 to 19) on shelves which are sought out by children, and the advertising for products such as *Deathwish III*, Domark's ill-fated *Friday The 13th*, and Ocean's *Renegade* have been called into judgement by the computer press, retailers and parents.

Software houses are also being forced to tone down the violence in their games in order to save their export markets. Ocean has had to alter its version of *Renegade* in keeping with anti-violence laws in Germany. The game included a thug's head bashed open on the pavement and his blood leaking out. Such violence is not allowed in Germany and it is a less than subtle irony that another country is affecting the standards of our software industry.

LATEST CRAZES

The entertainment software industry only survives because it keeps up with the tastes of players. At the beginning of 1987 the craze was for film tie-ins and we saw *Top Gun*, *Cobra* and *Aliens* high in the charts. Since then coin-ops have flooded onto the market and, according to players and software houses alike, there's nothing better.

Next year, however, products such as *Masters Of The Universe* and, perhaps, *Ghostbusters II* will see a resurgence of the film licence. Domark's *Not A Penny More, Not A Penny Less* is also likely to interest the middle range software houses, and some of the big 'uns, into book licensing which is a relatively unexplored area.

The big name writers whom everybody seems to be interested in are Len Deighton, Frederick Forsythe, Stephen King and Clive Barker. The first two have been exploited by Century Hutchinson and, now, Ariolasoft, but King and Barker are only just beginning to become aware of the computer potential of their books and films.

The computer marketing and licensing industry is becoming bigger by the minute. More money is being spent on transfer fees and brand name authors are slowly being made aware that the computer game is just as much an instrument of fantasy as a movie or book.

There is still a long way to go and it is a tricky, complex, business which requires funding and marketing expertise. Very soon, however, you will see the game of the film advertised on poster hoardings along with the book and soundtrack.

TOP GUN Out to launch



"Coin-op manufacturers are less strict than film companies about the conversion from original product to computer screen . . . "

SMARTER THAN THE AVERAGE STREETWISE GUY OR GAL!

From the wilds of Jellystone Park deep in the heart of the American Rockies come the lovable escapades of Yogi Bear – Hanna Barbera's parkwise bear. **Piranha** are now set to release the game of the cartoon series on the Commodore 64/128, the Spectrum and the Amstrad CPC.

To celebrate the launch of the game (Commodore 64/128 version reviewed this issue) **Piranha** are offering Yogi Bear memorabilia and games as prizes in this competition. Ten top winners will each receive a pair of Yogi Bear boxer-shorts, a Yogi T–shirt and a copy of the game, and for the next 30 runners up there are copies of the game – on either Commodore, Spectrum or Amstrad *.

To win you are first going to have to use a bit of grey matter – and probably an encyclopedia – unless, of course, you've got a PhD in Bears. The questions all revolve around Yogi, and other members of the bear family.

Each question's answer corresponds to the answer box in the grid – when you think you've discovered the correct answer fill it in the appropriate box, one letter per square (no characters for spaces or dashes).

If you do that correctly the name of another member of the bear family should become apparent reading vertically down the column with the arrow above it. Now tell us where the natural habitat of that bear is. Send your completed form to **SMARTER THAN THE AVERAGE COMPETITION, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*** to arrive no later than 19 December.

Win Yogi Bear boxer–shorts and T-shirts and copies of PIRANHA'S Yogi Bear game!



YOGI – THE QUIZ

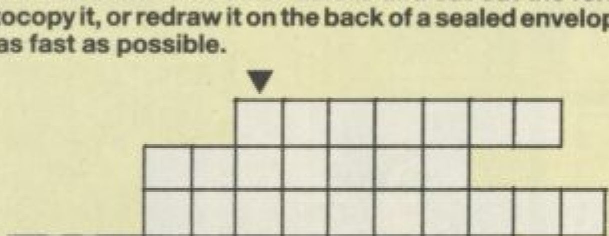
1) **When hungry what type of basket does Yogi go in search for?**
2) **What is the name of of Yogi's little pal?**
3) **What Park does Yogi reside at?**
4) **What's the Latin name for the Brown Bear?**
5) **The alternative, not latin, name for the Black Bear**

YOGI – THE CLOTHES

For ten lucky winners there are height-of-fashion boxer-shorts emblazoned with Yogi and Boo-Boo running around being madly pursued, as always, by Ranger Smith. There is also a duck wearing a baseball cap (but no-one can remember where the duck, or even the baseball cap, came into the story). And then there are the Yogi T–shirts with his familiar catch-phrase across it – and a copy of the game.

YOGI – THE ENTRY FORM

Fill in the answers and other details and cut out the form (or photocopy it, or redraw it on the back of a sealed envelope) and send it in as fast as possible.

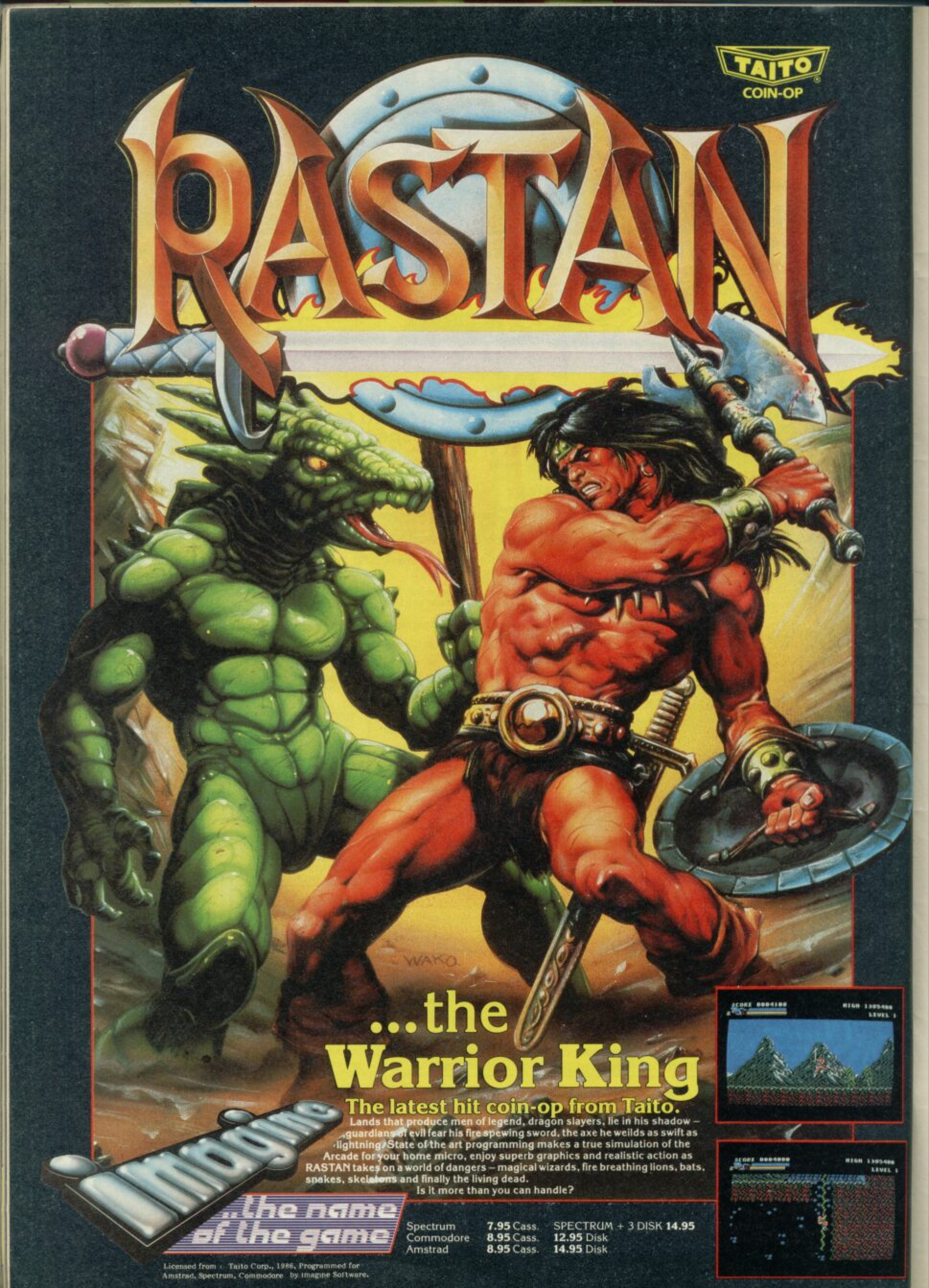


The ☐☐☐☐☐ **bear's natural habitat is** ....

Name ....
Address ....
....
Postcode ....
Computer ....

* **Please note that at the time of going to press little has been heard of the Amstrad CPC version of *Yogi*. Amstrad winners should be prepared to wait for their game, or alternatively may choose another game from Piranha's back catalogue: State which please.**

In case Amstrad *Yogi* is not ready in time, and I am not prepared to wait, instead I would like to have:


TAITO
COIN-OP
RASTAN
WAKO
...the
Warrior King
The latest hit coin-op from Taito.
Lands that produce men of legend, dragon slayers, lie in his shadow – guardians of evil fear his fire spewing sword, the axe he weilds as swift as lightning. State of the art programming makes a true simulation of the Arcade for your home micro, enjoy superb graphics and realistic action as RASTAN takes on a world of dangers – magical wizards, fire breathing lions, bats, snakes, skeletons and finally the living dead.
Is it more than you can handle?
imagine
..the name of the game
Spectrum 7.95 Cass. SPECTRUM + 3 DISK 14.95
Commodore 8.95 Cass. 12.95 Disk
Amstrad 8.95 Cass. 14.95 Disk
Licensed from © Taito Corp., 1986, Programmed for Amstrad, Spectrum, Commodore by Imagine Software.

IN THE SHADES

A new interactive, multi-user game has recently started up on Micronet – the area of Prestel run independently for home computer users. Inspired by the original MUD, or Multi-User Dungeon that kept keen modem owners on-line late at night to a mainframe buried in the heart of an English university, *Shades* was written by **Neil Newell** specially for Micronet.

To access the game you need a modem capable of 1200/75 baud Viewdata operation so that you can get online to Micronet, which occupies a considerable chunk of British Telecom's Prestel information service. You also need a computer, a telephone and of course an account number valid for either Prestel or Micronet – apart from telephone charges (usually at the local rate), playing *Shades* costs either 6p a minute or 1.62p a minute depending on whether you're a mere Prestel subscriber or have taken the sensible route for any home-micro-owner, and are entitled to the cheaper rate because you are a Micronet subscriber.

Up to eight people can play in one *Shades* game, and up to eight games can be run by the system at any one time. Entering a game with your specially assumed *Shades* persona, the aim is to wander around the land collecting treasure (for deposit with a mad king) and interacting with the other players, known as *Shadists*. Points are built up and added to your persona's character in a number of ways – killing other players numbers amongst them.

The games reset every so often, so if all the other players have nabbed the available treasure it won't be long before you get a chance of collecting some yourself. Points are added to the score associated with a player's persona and are transferred with characters from game to game. The ultimate ambition of any self-respecting player is to advance from the starting rank of Novice to Wizard or Witch – *Shades* is an equal opportunities game, with separate rankings for male and female players, who progress up the ranks from novice, to Innocent (male) or Pure (female) and a host of others until they reach the pinnacle of success. The stamina, strength and spell-casting ability of a player's persona increases as play progresses and points are earned.

The range of commands available is remarkably large – for instance there are over 40 ways of interacting with another *Shadist* on-line. And players 'socialise' during a game in a neutral zone – the pub known as The Talking Shoppe where fighting isn't allowed.

If the idea of playing *Shades* appeals to you, but you lack the modem, Micronet might be able to come to the rescue. They're offering a couple of modems, together with a Micronet subscription and 25 hours free play on *Shades* to two winners of this competition. All you have to do is answer the four questions we've set, complete the tiebreaker (in an interestingly original way) in 15 words or less and post your entry to **Re-Shades Competition, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*** to arrive before 19 December.

SHADISTIC QUESTIONS

1) **What does MUG stand for?**
2) **What do SHADES players call themselves?**
3) **What is the pub in SHADES called**
4) **SHADES players start as novices – what is the next level?**

Our standard competition rules apply, check out the masthead if you're in any doubt.

Due to a touch of over-zelous hacking on the part of our Art Department, last issue's SHADES competition had a little something missing – information relevant to the answers was mistakenly dropped out. As a result not all questions could be answered. Apologies all round. To make up, we are nothing if not fair (we also have two modems cluttering up the office), we proudly present the full, un–abridged version of the SHADES Competition . . .

win the magic key to

MICRONET Shades



We're giving away two of these fabulous packages worth over £250!

A Pace LINNET auto-dial, auto-answer intelligent modem. Plug this into your computer, connect it up to the phone line and the world of online communications becomes your oyster.



TOGETHER WITH ONE YEAR'S FREE SUBSCRIPTION TO MICRONET

Connecting your computer to the vast information store provided by Micronet gives access to on-line, interactive games – including SHADES and the multi-user space strategy game STARNET. There are interactive CHATLINEs where Micronet subscribers can converse with one another by typing messages on their computer keyboard and broadcasting them to the Micronet world at large. News, reviews, and downloadable software are all available to the casual browser, while special areas of The Net, as Micronet is known to its users, are given over to machine-specific databases where you can find all the latest information relevant to your micro.

plus 25 Hours of free adventuring in the land of SHADES

1 ....

2 ....

3 ....

4 ....

I want to play SHADES because ....

....

....

NAME ....

ADDRESS ....

....

Send your entry to SHADES COMPETITION, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB

THE ADVERTISING GAME

Between a third to a half of any computer magazine is taken up by advertising. But who produces these masterpieces of hype, and how? To find out more, Nik Wild and Oliver Frey spoke to Stephen Blower, the man behind the Ocean and Imagine adverts.

It is with brash and colourful designs and illustrations that Britain's software houses do their best to convince the public that their games must be bought. The ads are the public face of a software house and can make or break its image. They can be great, they can be bad, and we usually take them for granted.



Stephen Blower, the man in charge of creating Ocean and Imagine's public image through advertising

But for Stephen Blower they are his entire working life. 'My job is to create Ocean's image in an exciting and up-market way, and to keep it well in sight above the hubble bubble of the rest of the industry's advertising.'

Sitting at his work table in one of two smallish offices that make up Ocean's art department, Stephen seems rather quiet and mild compared to the youthful exuberance of his ad creations. But there is a boyish sense of humour there to accompany the professional efficiency. And he and his team of three need both to get through the workload a large company like Ocean generates.

'It's early October, and we're already into the run-up to Christmas. We've got eleven new ads to prepare this month alone, and on top of that there's posters and other point-of-sale material for the shops, which Christmas demands. So much extra, there just doesn't seem to be the time to get round to doing it all.'

Due to the nature of magazine schedules, Steve and his team have to work well in advance of the time readers get to see the results of their efforts. Ads for a December issue of a computer magazine have to be completed and with the printer mid- to late-October; the printer takes about a week to finish his job, and then it takes distribution another week to get the magazine into the shops: early- to mid-November for a December issue, depending on publication date.

STORY TO PICTURE

Add to this the fact that Steve is the very first in line on announcing a new game, then you get to see the problems: the game idea is there, a possible release date is mooted; but often only the roughest graphic elements of the software exist, from which packaging and advertising art must be developed. So in a sense he has to be the blind leading the slightly sighted towards a complete ad concept.

Taking the game's storyline he has to decide what sort of illustration is required to best sell it, and what sort of design will suit it. Paintings are obviously far removed in look from actual computer graphics, but they have to be exciting in their own right or they will not convey the thrills to be had from the forthcoming gameplay. Bob Wakelin produces most of Ocean's advertising art: 'With Bob, you show him the game or what material we have on it,' says Steve. 'He knows what we want for the market, and I know I can trust him to go off and do a picture that fits. Sometimes, if he cannot spark off the idea, I help out by going through books and developing a rough sketch. He'll then take it from there.

'I like Bob's stuff very much. Also his initial pencil drawing is so detailed you almost know exactly what he is going to end up with before he starts painting – it's almost like architecture in a way, like a blue print.'

GETTING THE COPY

So much for the actual painting. But obviously there are more elements to an ad page. For one, decisions have to be taken as to whether a game merits a double page spread, a single page, or a share of a page with another game. It is down to financial considerations: how much does the company expect a game to sell? Not every product can be a winner, and experience helps in making a decision. There is also the fact that a game may be initially promoted with a full page on its own and then later kept in the public's eye a little longer by twinning it more cost effectively with another game that has passed its peak selling slot in the fast-moving world of the software market. Whatever the decision, the fact that Ocean publishes many games a month means that that Steve is constantly running the gauntlet of magazine schedules to keep up with their output of new and revamped game ads.

Given the fact that he is responsible for the look of the publicity, it may seem unusual that Steve Blower also writes all the text in the ad, a task advertising agencies have copy writers for. But Ocean has grown in the tight-knit way that many of Britain's new dynamic companies have, where the feeling is that it is better to be completely in control of all aspects of one's creative output. Spend less money with intermediates and rely on a trusted team. Steve designs the ad and feels '. . . the copy has to be written so that it works with the visual concept rather than just be a scenario for the game, and I position it within the illustration to hopefully look its best.'

"With Bob (Wakelin), you show him the game, and I know I can trust him to go off and do a picture that fits."

NO APPROVAL TIME

Given the speed he has to work at, Steve ends up with all the responsibility for his output. There is hardly ever the time to show a rough concept to the fellow management for approval, and even less to print proofs (one-off copies) of the finished design: 'There just isn't time to change anything when we've done it, so I have to try and make sure it's right first time. Obviously you get times when it doesn't work out that way, and then you're in trouble, but hopefully you get things reasonably correct when you put them down on paper.'



An example of the problem Steve Blower faces every day: how will the lettering he adds on an overlay look when it is combined with the illustration? 'Dynamite' was an ad for four games timed to appear around 5 November two years ago. As you can see, the text is all in black, the artist must use imagination to 'see' how the final colours will integrate with the background, and then – if there is no time for colour proofs to be made – hope he chose well.



THE NEVERENDING STORY

Ocean's advert for The Neverending Story *went through many transformations, and appeared in several different versions.*

For this particular game Ocean wanted to tie-in with the film's poster image (see John Gilbert's article on licensing in this issue, page 112), and so Steve had to work from coloured photographs of the original poster artwork. On its own, though, that would have been boring, so he made up a montage of images, including several screens taken from the game itself.

Picture One
The montage is built up on a board. The poster forms the background, right down through the centre, including the white dragon, to the mountain and the rocks around it. But the figure at the top right has been cut up from elsewhere in the poster and repositioned to make the composition look more interesting. The five screen shots are also cut and pasted into position, and then at the base, Steve has used a monochrome film publicity still. Naturally, all these ragged cut edges will show up, and the whole thing has a rough-and-ready look about it . . .

A recent job he did typifies the sort of problems Steve can be faced with. Ocean decided to put out a compilation of sports games, some of their own and some to be from other software houses. A title was decided on, *Game, Set And Match*, and Steve designed a logo and airbrushed it one afternoon. Before all the games were signed up an ad was urgently required for abroad. Only having Ocean and Imagine's own titles to work on, a compilation ad was designed using the old packaging artwork and sent off.

Obviously this version could only be a stop-gap and unfair to the other software houses' contributions, showing only Ocean product as it did. So, the moment the list of games to be



Picture Two
For the next stage of preparation, Steve positions a sheet of clear acetate over the montage and then airbrushes black over the area, carefully avoiding the central images which he wants to show through. Here we show just the overlay. For more effect, Steve adds some pale clouds at the top; and to help the mountain blend into the mono publicity still, he adds some glow around the shape, and leading down in rays towards the small figure seated at the bottom.

A DESIGN FOR LIFE

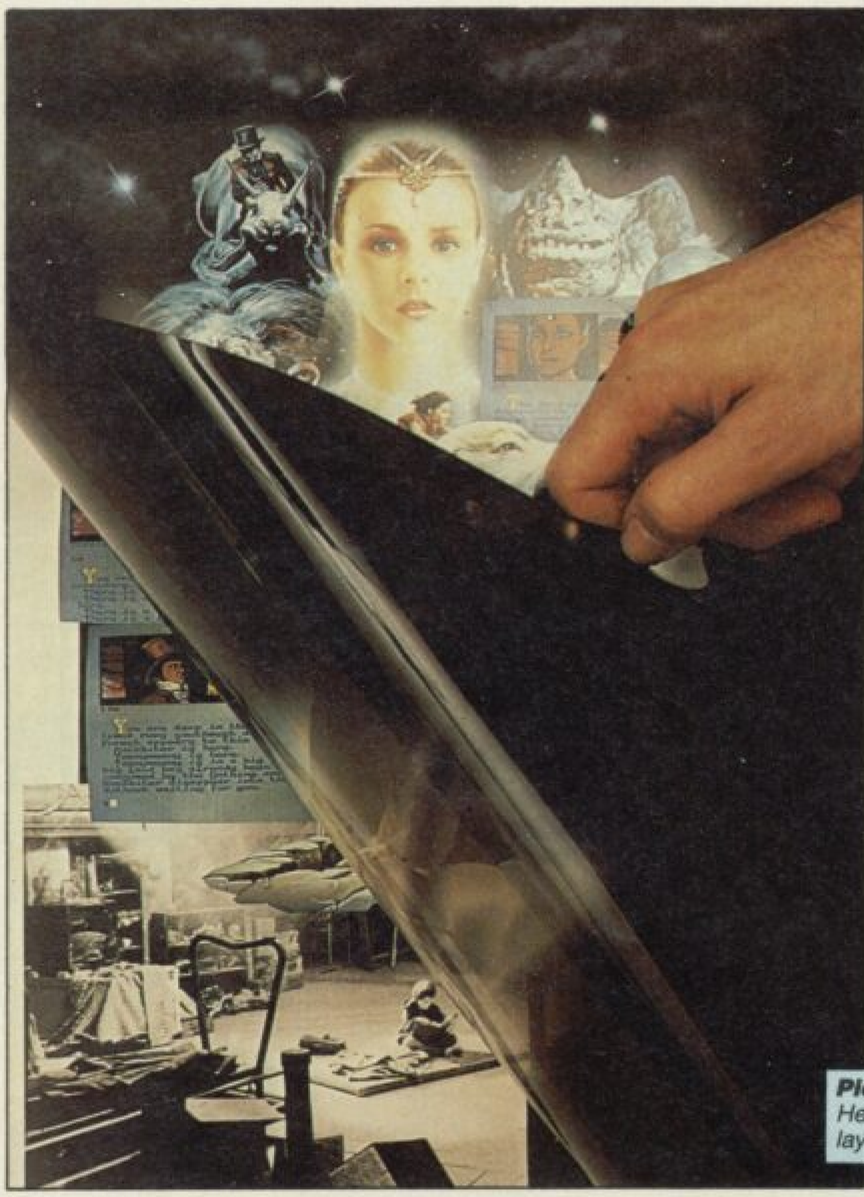
Stephen Blower is 37. Southport Art College and Liverpool Art College (Fine Art) were followed by eight years of advertising agency work where he rose to studio manager and then art director. He became self-employed for three years, during which time he met David Lawson and Mark Butler when they asked him to design a logo for their new company: It would be called Imagine – The Name Of The Game. Before long he was designing and illustrating everything for them and joined the company in 1982.

He left Imagine two years later, before it went into receivership, and became freelance again. Twelve months on he was asked to join Ocean as its art director, to find that an old logo design of his joined him when Ocean purchased and relaunched the Imagine label.

Stephen Blower is now a company director of Ocean.

The background to this panel is from a piece of artwork Steve did to be used in this year's Ocean brochure for the PCW Show. It is all airbrushed (using masks) over a 'pixel' grid. In the event, only a fraction of the background was used – a common enough happenstance in a commercial artist's life.

PRESS ANY KEY



Picture Three
Here you can see how the two layers relate to each other.

"There just isn't time to change anything when we've done it, so I have to try and make sure it's right first time."

included was fixed, Steve commissioned a painting depicting the various sports represented which would also allow the addition of his *Game, Set And Match* logo. The illustration was felt to look a little loose and not strong enough, so when the finished page design was sent off to the repro house that would produce the colour separations for printing, instructions were given to artificially add a mezzotint effect to it. Also, a green and white grid background and a picture of Daley Thompson were added to complete the design, which you can see in the packaging which appears in the ad on page 123 of this issue.

IMAGINE

Part of any designer's job when he or she works on anything to be printed is to imagine a lot of things: given a finished painting to start off with: what will the lettering that you add separately look like? How will the colour you have instructed the repro house to make the lettering work with the illustration when the two are combined (your typesetting text was only black in its original form)? Will that game logo design stand out like a sore thumb? And so on. So many elements of a printed page are put together mechanically by specialist outside sub-contractors, that to see the finished thing in the magazines is often a surprise – hopefully pleasant!

In the case of *Game, Set And Match*, Steve was not wholly satisfied, and the ad has since undergone more changes, but there is never much time to worry about upsets like this, if next day he finds himself immersed in producing a 16-page brochure for the PCW Show which is required yesterday, and which he won't see complete until its delivery on the stand! The worry of what *that* will look like has taken over.

Does he ever lose his cool? 'Well, the pressure sometimes gets a bit much. You know, where at the end of the week you go out for a pint with your mates – and find you just can't talk to them because you're still mentally in the office, spaced-out somewhere. I'm like that, but it doesn't happen too often.'



Picture Four
How the result combines to create an atmospheric and highly polished finish. All that needs to be added on another overlay are the text elements. The ad appeared in many magazines in this form, although the two screen shots on the top overlay were added to later versions to give more impact as it was felt the original version wasn't plugging the game's screen appearance enough.

"We've got eleven new ads to prepare this month alone . . . there just doesn't seem to be the time to get round to doing it all."

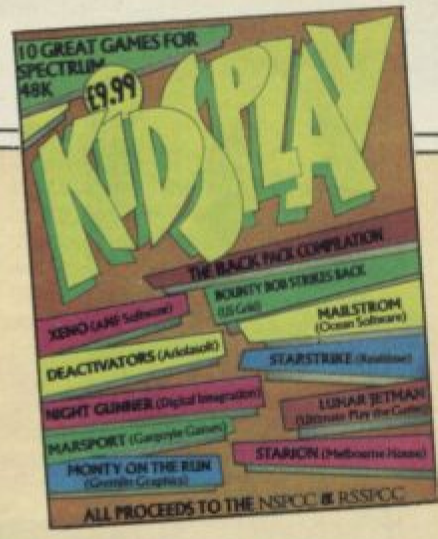
Picture Five
The advertisement for The Neverending Story as it was printed in CRASH Magazine




10 The GREATEST EVER SPORTS PACK
10 HIT GAMES
OVER 20 EXCITING EVENTS
GAME SET AND MATCH
10
HIT GAMES
OVER
20
EXCITING EVENTS
GAME SET AND MATCH
ocean
AVAILABLE FOR
AMSTRAD
COMMODORE
SPECTRUM
SPECTRUM + 3
CASSETTE
£12.95
DISK
£17.95
FROM YOUR LOCAL SOFTWARE DEALER NOW!
ocean
FEATURING
BASKETBALL · SOCCER · VAULT · SWIMMING · SHOOTING · ARCHERY · TRIPLE JUMP · WEIGHT LIFTING · PING-PONG · PISTOL SHOOTING · CYCLING · SPRING BOARD DIVING · GIANT SLALOM · ROWING · PENALTIES · SKI JUMP · TUG OF WAR · TENNIS · BASEBALL · BOXING · SQUASH · SNOOKER/POOL ·
Ocean Software Limited · Ocean House · 6 Central Street · Manchester · M2 5NS · Telephone 061 832 6633 · Telex 669977 Oceans G

the GAMES machine SHOPPING

Introducing four pages of great mail order shopping for your home entertainment. All the software you could want, plus joysticks, consoles and clothing make this a selection worth browsing through! Check out our special offers for those extra savings and remember, all prices include VAT and postage & packing. Order now in time for Christmas!



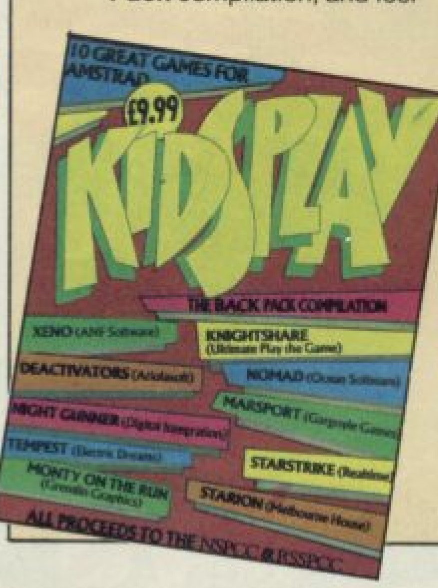
Ten great games for the Spectrum 48K, CBM 64 and Amstrad

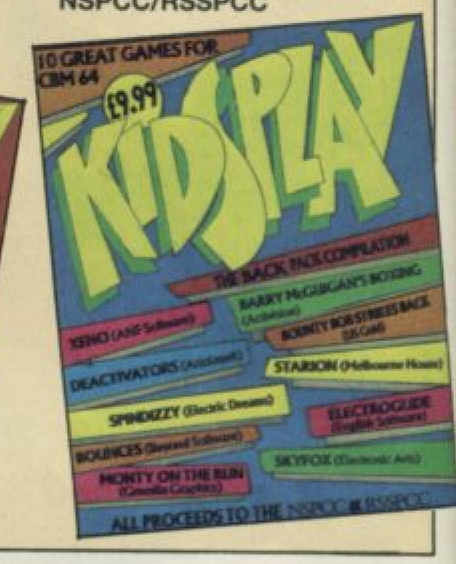
KIDSPLAY

Fancy getting the likes of *Xeno, Deactivators, Monty On The Run, Starion*, and six more classic games in one brill **Back Pack** compilation, and feel you're also helping others?

Then grab this opportunity at our great discount offer of only **£6.99** – £3 OFF the normal £9.99 price! Cassette only.

All proceeds go to the NSPCC/RSSPCC





THE NOT TRIVIAL TRIVIAL PURSUIT CHRISTMAS HALF PRICE OFFER

Join in on the fun everyone's having with **Domark**'s ***Trivial Pursuit*** with this pursuable deal:

Buy a copy of the *Trivial Pursuit* start-up 'Genus' cassette (Spectrum, CBM 64,Amstrad, BBC) at **£14.95** and get both add-on packs of questions **FREE** – Save £15.90!



If you already own the TP Genus Edition – then buy both add-on packs for **£7.95**: A saving of £7.95!

Get other versions of TP Genus – Cassette or Disk – at HALF the normal price – saving up to £12.45!

Atari ST Disk
Amstrad PCW 8256 Disk
Atari 8-bit Disk
All normally £19.95 –**NOW £9.95!**
Atari 8-bit cassette down from £14.95 to**£7.45**
IBM Disk halved from £24.95 to**£12.45**

COLOURFUL GAMES MACHINE T-SHIRTS

Full colour logo on white, and available in two sizes: ***Medium*** *and* ***trendy XX Large****. 50% cotton and 50% polyester.*

£5.50



A speed of light game for your Atari ST and Amiga!

EXTENSOR

Diamond Games



*You are invited to compete in the new Olympic Games in the deserts of Mars. But they've gone and added a deadly new discipline:**Extensor!***
Race your Videodrome against your opponent and ensnare him with the solid wall of energy you trail behind you. Quick reactions only for this one – or you're dead!
Normally £14.95 – ***NOW £6.95***

Stop vacuuming your machine with

TGM COVERS

One day they'll ban dust, but in the meantime it's one of the biggest single keyboard killers around. But don't worry! We've had some super quality covers made specially for your keyboard.

Amiga 500 £6.00
Atari 520 ST £6.00
Amstrad PC 8256 Set (Monitor, Keyboard and Printer) £15.00

STICK IT ON DISK

Slipped a disk? Then stock up with THE GAMES MACHINE!

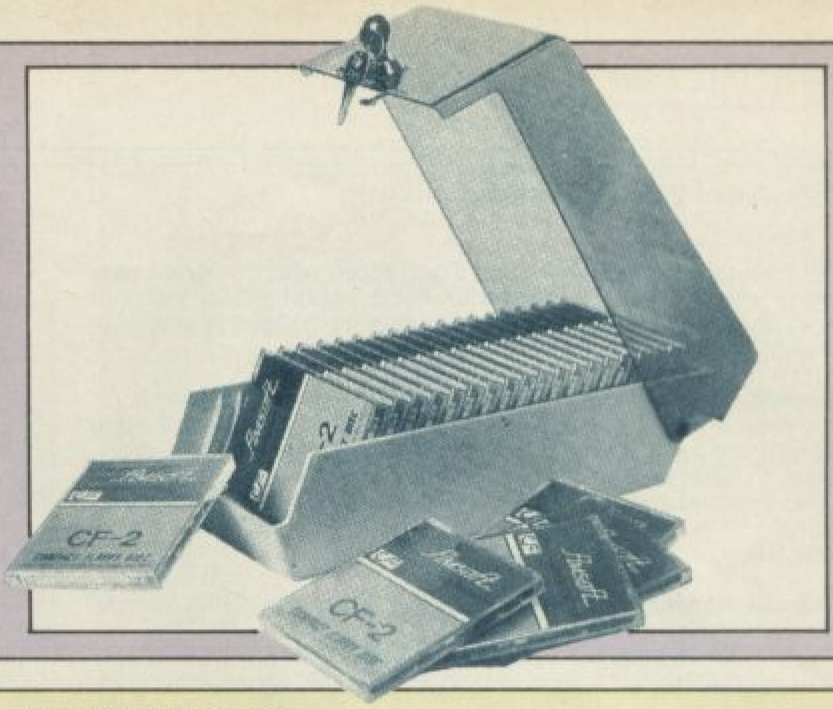
CBM 64/128
Blank 5.25" *single sided SS/DD 48 TPI box of 10 disks* ***£6.80***
Blank 5.25" *double sided DS/DD box of 10 disks* ***£7.50***

ATARI ST/APRICOT
Blank 3.5" *single sided SS 135 TPI box of 10 disks* ***£14.00***
Blank 3.5" *double sided DS 135 TPI box of 10 disks* ***£15.60***

AMSTRAD
3" *blank CF2 Amsoft box of ten disks* ***£28.30***

IBM PC/AT
5.25" *blank HD 1.6 MB box of ten disks* ***£18.50***

Store 'em in your very own lockable ***Disk Storage Boxes***
DD100L*, which will look after up to one hundred 5.25" disks –* ***only £10***
AMS 20L*, which takes 20x3" disks in cases –* ***£9.50***
MD 70L*, which stores up to 70x3.5" disks –* ***£9.50***



JOYSTICKS GALORE

Don't let those aliens get at you – tool up with a brand new joystick from our selection to suit all needs

KONIX SPEEDKING



The joystick that actually fits your hand, with a fire button angled for your trigger finger to ensure accurate high-speed action. Solid steel break-proof shaft with neat clicking sound for every precision move you make.

Normal price £11.99 – ***OUR PRICE £10.99***

TERMINATOR

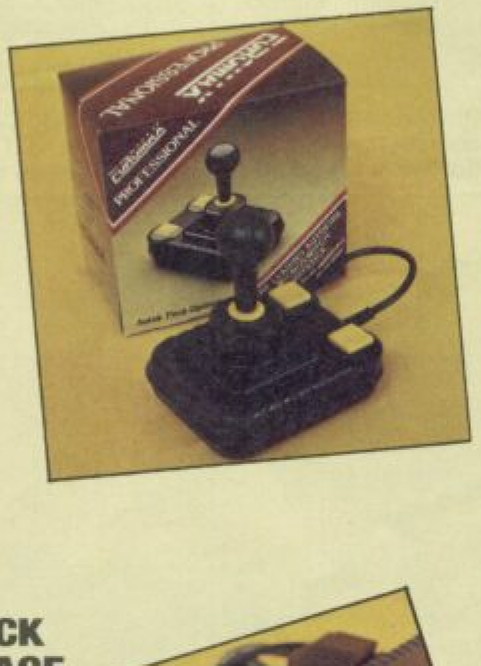


Built like a hand grenade and just as lethal in action, this totally new Danish design packs top quality micro switches for top-notch control and kool high-scores.

Normally £19.95 – ***TGM PRICE £14.95!***

Two winners from Euromax . . .

EUROMAX PROFESSIONAL STANDARD



High durability, rapid response and ultra sensitive movement accuracy from this advanced ergonomic design.Ideal for left or right hand play. 1.5m cord
£15.95

EUROMAX PROFESSIONAL AUTOFIRE

All the quality of the standard, with the added bonus of the Auto Fire Option for when the going gets tough!
£18.95

For Amstrad owners

EUROMAX JOYSTICK AUTOFIRE INTERFACE



Specially made for the Amstrad 464, 664 and 6128, this interface prevents continuous use of Autofire Joysticks causing equipment malfunction.
£5.95

New from Euromax . . .

MICRO-HANDLER MULTI-FUNCTION JOYSTICK



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PLEASE NOTE: JOYSTICKS AND DISKS ONLY AVAILABLE IN UK AND EIRE!

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SOFTWARE

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FREDDY HARDEST *(IMAGINE)*
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PHASORS ON STUN

WIN A BRITANNIA HAND-HELD JOYSTICK

Hand held joysticks seem to be all the rage of late, the ability to jump about while blasting marauding aliens and not having to rely on rubber suction feet for a stable sprite controller are definite advantages to shoot-'em-up addicts. The introduction of micro-switches also aids the quest for ultimate dexterity as they allow pixel perfect accuracy and positive directional movements for the more exacting style of game.

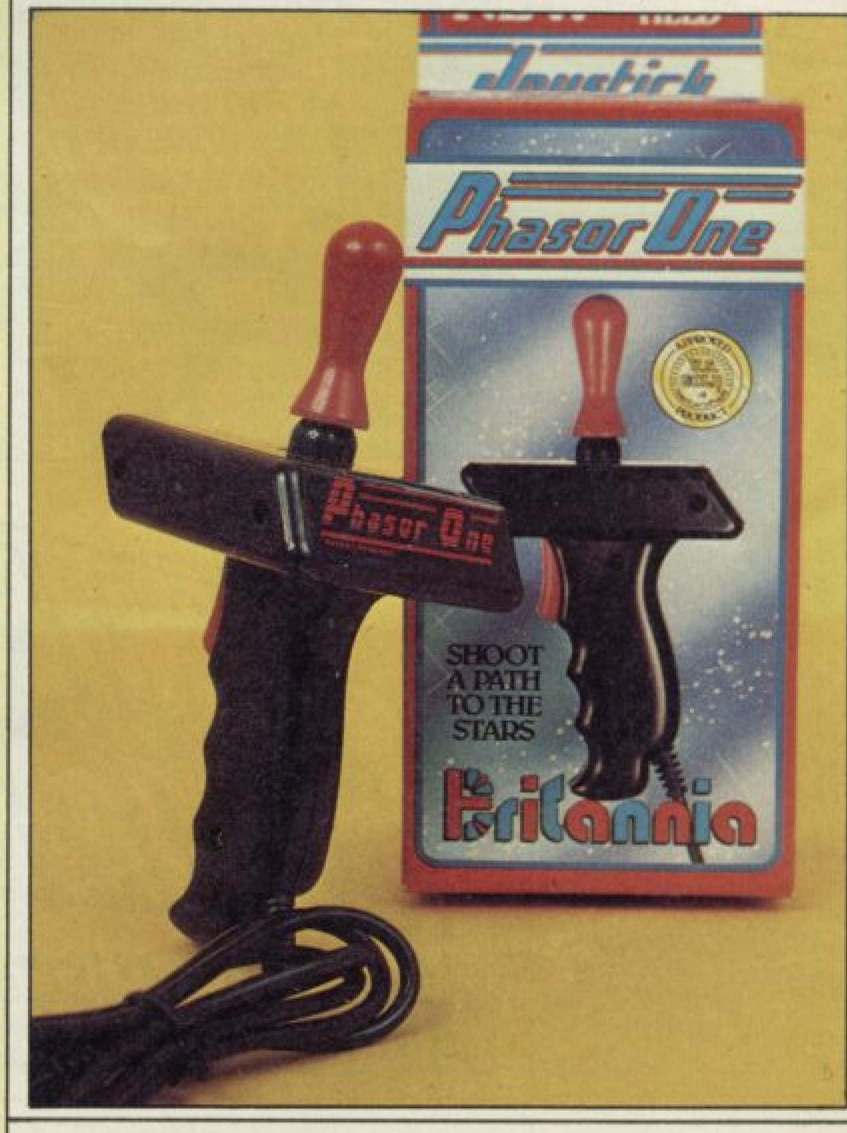
Britannia Software Ltd have produced a hand-held joystick, complete with micro-switches, to meet the demands of modern computer games. Going by the name of **Phasor One**, this stick is ergonomically designed, robust, comfortable to hold and very accurate to use, and now courtesy of **Britannia Software** and THE GAMES MACHINE, here is your chance to become the proud owner of one of these joysticks.

We have 20 **Phasor One**s to give away, and all you have o do to enter the competition is answer the five questions set out here.

Send your entries on a postcard or the back of sealed envelope to PHASOR COMPETITION, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB*, and don't forget your name and address. All entries must reach us by 19 December. The first 20 correct entries pulled out of the bag will win their senders a Britannia Phasor One joystick.

Our standard competition rules apply, check out the masthead if you are in any doubt.

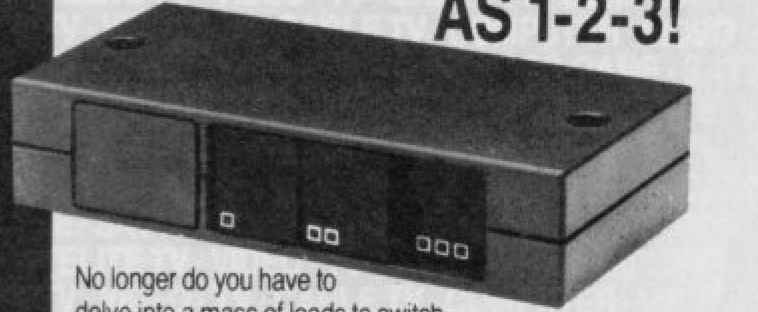
1) What is the hero's name in the Psygnosis graphic adventure *Barbarian*?
2) Who wrote the music for the Elite Systems game, *Thundercats*?
3) Who wrote the original comic strip stories for *Passengers On The Wind*?
4) In which town is the Konami release *Vampire Killer* set?
5) In what country does *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom* take place?





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IBM PC	£24.99 Disk

Screen shot from Atari ST

THE COLOUR RED

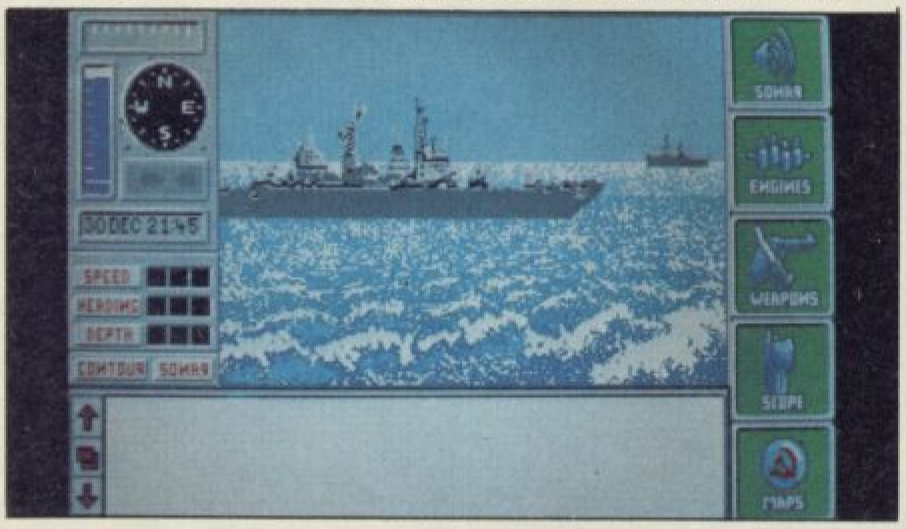
The Hunt For Red October, a new submarine warfare simulation from ARGUS is nearing completion. Here's a taster of what to expect from the Atari ST version AND a chance not only to win a copy of the game, but also an all-expenses day out to visit HMS BELFAST in London.

Red October – Russia's most advanced missile submarine, with the on-board capability to destroy 200 cities, is about to defect to the USA. The scenario is taken from the huge best-seller novel written by Tom Clancy.

Taking control of Red October and its 113-man crew, the task ahead is perilous, especially when the Russian Navy has other plans for the submarine – they built it and know its strengths and weaknesses.

Hot on your trail is the Russian navy in its hunter ships. If the warning alarm sounds then you have been detected – either go full steam ahead and make a belt for it, or turn and fire a salvo of up to four torpedos at the enemy above, either guiding them manually or under sonar control. Alternatively, if you feel like being violent right from the outset you can give chase to your pursuers using the hunt and attack systems and eliminating them before they find you.

Argus's new submarine warfare simulation brings you the challenge of the high seas. The screen shows the main display window from the Atari ST version



You play the submarine's commander. Navigating with the aid of a seabed contour map, you also gain an overall picture of the Atlantic showing Red October's position in relation to both the US Navy fleet and the Russian fleet. Movement of the fleet can only be watched when surfaced and radio transmissions intercepted. Also, when surfaced repairs are undertaken automatically; but then you are risking detection, so it is worthwhile to use the periscope before actually surfacing.

Orders to the crew are controlled simply through the mouse or joystick. Reports are given back to you on the effectiveness of your decisions through a scrolling message. The same panel doubles for incoming messages on the bridge.

The Hunt For Red October is soon to be available for the Atari ST, Amiga, IBM PC (£24.95), Commodore 64/128, Spectrum 48/128 and Amstrad CPC (£14.95 cassette).

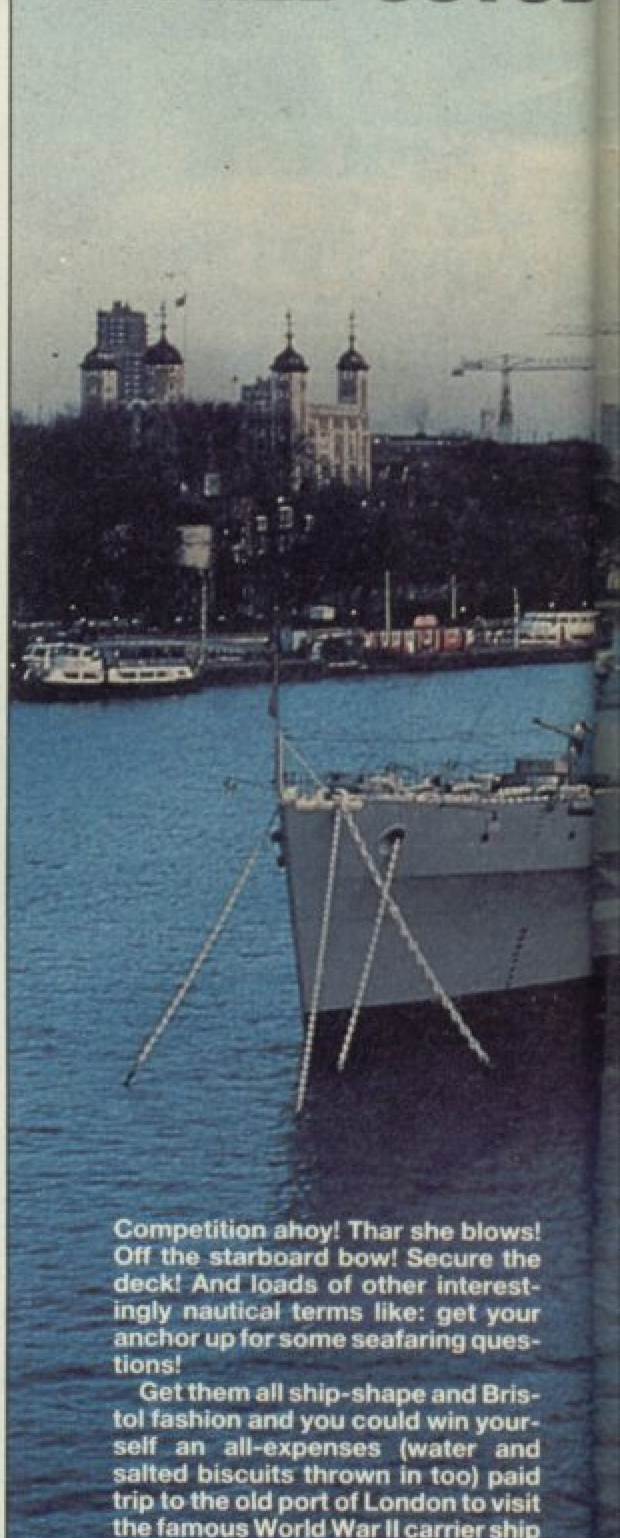
The four ships of the Russian fleet



DIVE!
DIVE!
DIVE!

SEE H
AND

Win a visit to HMS
FOR RED OCTOB



Competition ahoy! Thar she blows! Off the starboard bow! Secure the deck! And loads of other interestingly nautical terms like: get your anchor up for some seafaring questions!

Get them all ship-shape and Bristol fashion and you could win yourself an all-expenses (water and salted biscuits thrown in too) paid trip to the old port of London to visit the famous World War II carrier ship HMS Belfast courtesy of Argus Press Software (plus a copy of *The Hunt For Red October*). Argus let us down a bit on this one, but try as they might, they couldn't persuade the Russian Navy to let us roam over Red October herself. How-



HMS BELFAST RED OCTOBER!

...S Belfast and a copy of the new game THE HUNT ...ER . . .

ever, if you happen to be nautically minded and interested in warships, The Imperial War Museum's HMS Belfast, with seven accessable decks is a fascinating experience.

That's an admiral first prize, and the next ten under-seadogs will each receive a copy of *The Hunt For Red October* on a machine of their choice. To be in with a chance of winning, answer the five questions below and send the answers together with your name and address, on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope to: RED OCTOBER COMPETITION, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*, to arrive no later than 19 December.

1) What was the name of Captain Nemo's submarine in *20,000 League Under The Sea* by Jules Verne?
2) Which side of a ship is larbord?
3) What traditional illness did sailors suffer from due to lack of Vitamin C?
4) Where is the stern of a ship?
5) Where would you find a plimsol line?

Our standard competition rules apply, if you're in any doubt check the masthead.


She's Mad. She's Bad.
She's Brought Her Dad.
MERCY DASH
WRITTEN BY MEL CROUCHER
DRAWN BY ROBIN EVANS
WHEN YO REPUTASHUN FALLS TA BITS...
CALL IN THE NURSIE LORD HAVE MERCY
WHEN YO' SOFTWARE HOUSE IN DA PITS
OPEN YO PURSIE LORD HAVE MERCY
WHO DA GAL WID FACE DAT FITS?
FO BETTER OR WORSIE HER NAME MERCY
GO GET YO CASH FLOW OUT DA RED...
BOWDLERIZED VERSIE LORD GIMME MERCY...
ROVERRR! DA-AD! I'M HO-O-OME!!
CRASH
WHAT A DAY! I'M TOADLY BLITZED! LIONEL HAD TO DARKEN MY ROOTS AGAIN, I LOST ONE OF ME FLOPPIES DOWN THE RAM & INTERFACE AND I GOT CLAMPED UP AT THE WEST END...
BETTER SEE WHAT'S ON THE ANSWERPHONE!
BOOOOP! MERCY, THIS IS ENO REBMUN OF GRUESOME GAMES, FOR GODSAKE! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU PLAYING AT, WUMMUN? YOU PROMISED ME A BIG-NAME CELEBRITY TO ENDORSE OUR LATEST SHOOT-EM-UP BY LAST TUESDAY!! CALL ME AS SOON AS YOU GET IN, FOR GODSAKE, AND START EARNING YOUR BIG FAT FEE...
...WE LAUNCH TOMORROW, SO YOU BETTER COME THROUGH, BABY, OR WE'LL SUE THE MASCARA OFF YOU...
LUNCHTIME, THE NEXT DAY! MERCY IS LATE FOR HER APPOINTMENTS...
The RAM & INTERFACE
DRAT! I'M A PINT AND A HALF LATE!
SPIRO SPIGODA! HELLOOO!! MINE'S A LARGE ONE!
HELLOOO YERSELF! I'M BORASIC!
YOUR NAME IS MARTIN MAYNARD AND I CLAIM MY £20!
DON'T FORGET! DAVID CROSWELLER! 01 364 0123! CALL ME!
WELL PUSH OFF THEN!!
ULP! MERCY, WHERE DID YOU SPRING FROM?
...YEAH, WE'RE AT NUMBER ONE WITH 'ERROL FLYNN'S GRAND PRIX'...
NNK! EVANS, YOU FOUR-EYED PILL! WHY CAN'T YOU LOOK WHERE I'M GOING!
WE'RE IN THE NUMBER TWO'S
NOBODY MOVE! I'VE LOST A CONTACT LENS... IT ROLLED OVER HERE. AND IF ANYONE STEPS ON IT I'LL STEP ON THEM!
HERE WE GO MISS — EVERYTHING INTACT?
MIND YOUR OWN BIZ, NOSEY, OR... WELL, PRICK MY CHIPOLATA! COLONEL MAD MUNGO MALONE! I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!!
NOT QUITE...BUT I'VE GIVEN UP BEING A MERCENARY...
THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK, COCK...SIT DOWN - HAVE A CHEQUE - WAIT HERE - DON'T MOVE! SAVVY?!
ENO? LISTEN, REMEMBER THE CELEB I PROMISED YOU? NO SWEAT, DARLING, HE'S RIGHT HERE... EH? YOU'RE WAITING AT THE PRESS LAUNCH, HUH?
ERM...YES, OF COURSE I REMEMBER! HE'LL BE RIGHT OVER! YEAH, WELL JUST STALL 'EM! NOW HERE'S WHAT YOU WRITE ON YOUR PUBLICITY BLURB! GOT A PEN?
EH? YES, I KNOW HE'S AN OLD SOLDIER! GO GETTIM!
SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING, GENTLEMEN... HELP YOURSELVES TO SOME MORE HOSPITALITY...
GRUESOME GAMES
COL' MAD' MUNGO MALONE'S
DEATHWATCH BATTLE!
JUNGLE WARFARE WITH POWER PULSE RIFLE ATTACHED
SLURP
GITCHA FILTHY PICKERSOFFME BEER
SUITS US, OLD MAN... GLUGALUG
WHICH PRESH LAUNCH ISH THISH?
I'M ONLY HERE FOR THE VIOLENCE
BURP
PHARP
ENO, A TAXI HAS ARRIVED WITH MUNGO MALONE. BUT, ENO...
GOOD GIRL, RUN ALONG AND GET HIM READY...
BUT ENO
RUN ALONG NOW, THERE'S A GOOD GIRL!!
BUT HE'S A...OH, @!!!
...TOTALLY LETHAL COLONEL MAD MUNGO MA...MA... MA... MAMA!
DUMB CLUCK. AHAHA! GENTLEMEN OF THE PRESS, GRUESOME GAMES IS PROUD TO PRESENT THE HERO OF OUR LATEST SOFTWARE BLOCKBUSTER...THE ROUGHEST, TOUGHEST, SMELLIEST, EVILEST STEREOTYPEST...
HELLO EVERYONE... PEACE BE WITH YOU...
SWITCHBOARD, GET MERCY DASH FOR MR REBMUN, PLEASE!
THIS LOOKS YUMMY, DAD! TCHAH! THE 'PHONE...OH, I'LL DEAL WITH IT AFTER!
BRRRP. BRRRP BRRRP BRRRP BRRRP BRRRP
CLICK! MERCY DASH! SORRY, BUT I'M NOT AT HOME AND I WOULDN'T TRUST THE DAD TO TAKE A MESSAGE ANY MORE THAN I'D TRUST HIM TO TAKE MY TONSILS OUT, SO WOULD YOU LIKE TO SPEAK AFTER THE TONE? TARA! BOOOOP!
AAAAAAAAAAAARRGH!


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A super high speed shoot 'em up by Derek Brewster. Spectrum and Amstrad C.P.C.
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TERRA COGNITA
One of the original Code Masters classics. A superior scrolling shoot 'em up. Spectrum, C64, Amstrad C.P.C., C16 and +4.
COSMONUT
Five amazing games in one. Highly playable and brilliant value. C64.
SUPER G MAN
An intensely playable, horizontally scrolling, fast action arcade game. Spectrum, C64, C16 and +4.
PRO SKI SIMULATOR
The thrills without the spills. A top ten hit. Spectrum and Amstrad C.P.C.
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The all time race against time. Graphically brilliant. Spectrum only.
GHOST HUNTERS
Best selling second epic game from the Oliver twins. Spectrum, Amstrad C.P.C.
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THIS

Ladies and Gentlemen, with the next issue (Three – on sale 21 January 1988) THE GAMES MACHINE goes monthly. It goes without saying, therefore, that the Subscription Department is now officially open. And to kick off with, here's a neat FREE gift for everyone who subscribes . . .

Issue One of THE GAMES MACHINE, which went on sale just before the PCW Show, has been a huge success. The policy had always been to produce two or three bi-monthly issues to see how popular the magazine would be with readers. Well there's no need to wait, we have been so encouraged that this is the last bi-monthly issue – THE GAMES MACHINE goes monthly straight away!

Just in case reading Issue Two of THE GAMES MACHINE hasn't given you a clear idea of what the magazine is about, here is a brief run down on what to expect from Britain's newest multi-user computer entertainment magazine.

Leading articles on people in both the foreground and background of games software; articles on topics of central concern to the growth of computer entertainment, such as computer nasties and censorship; features on the practical and enjoyable use of your computer such as art, music and writing.

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" . . . reviews give ratings for each format, rather than the more common 'lumped-in' rating system of other magazines."

SCRIPTIONS



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ROBOTS IN VIDEO



The SFX crew built 18 versions of No. 5 for Short Circuit

Robots have been a part of movies even longer than computers. In this, the second of their microchip videographies, Martyn Lester and Martin Coxhead get to grips with the mechanical stars.

Before discussing robots on video, for reasons of clarity a few definitions have to be made. Robots are entirely mechanical or electronic, not bearing any resemblance to a human form. Cyborgs are part mechanical/electronic and part human, while androids are robots in pseudo-human form, definitely intended to resemble a genuine person. Understood? We'll be covering cyborgs and androids next issue but for the moment we confine ourselves to the purely mechanical stars of the movies.

Robots and robotics systems which represent genuine current technology are very rare in today's movies. Of the few examples available is, strangely, the Chuck Norris action pictures *Code of Silence* (Rank Video) in which cop Norris finally turns on the gang of heavily-armed villains with an armoured, weapon-carrying semi-tank, remotely controlled.

Although the movie takes more liberties with fire-power and sophistication, police robots do exist, as seen in a couple of episodes of *Hill Street Blues* under the command of gung-ho Lt Howard Hunter (James B Sikking). These should eventually reach video libraries on Channel 5, which is handling the series.

Similarly the bomb-defusing robots used by the British Army in Northern Ireland found themselves updated to a modified form in the SF story *Booby Trap* (Medusa), a post-holocaust tale where a young couple, terrorised by mutant street gangs, devise a very functional looking robot for revenge. Its offensive capabilities include a few gun barrels and a very useful testicle-crushing claw. Eek!

More feasible current robotics came in the highly praised Australian production *Malcolm* (Virgin Video), in which Colin Friels played the title character, a slightly retarded and withdrawn young man who happens to have a genius for heath-robinson style robots and cybernetic systems for serving him tea in bed and opening the mail.

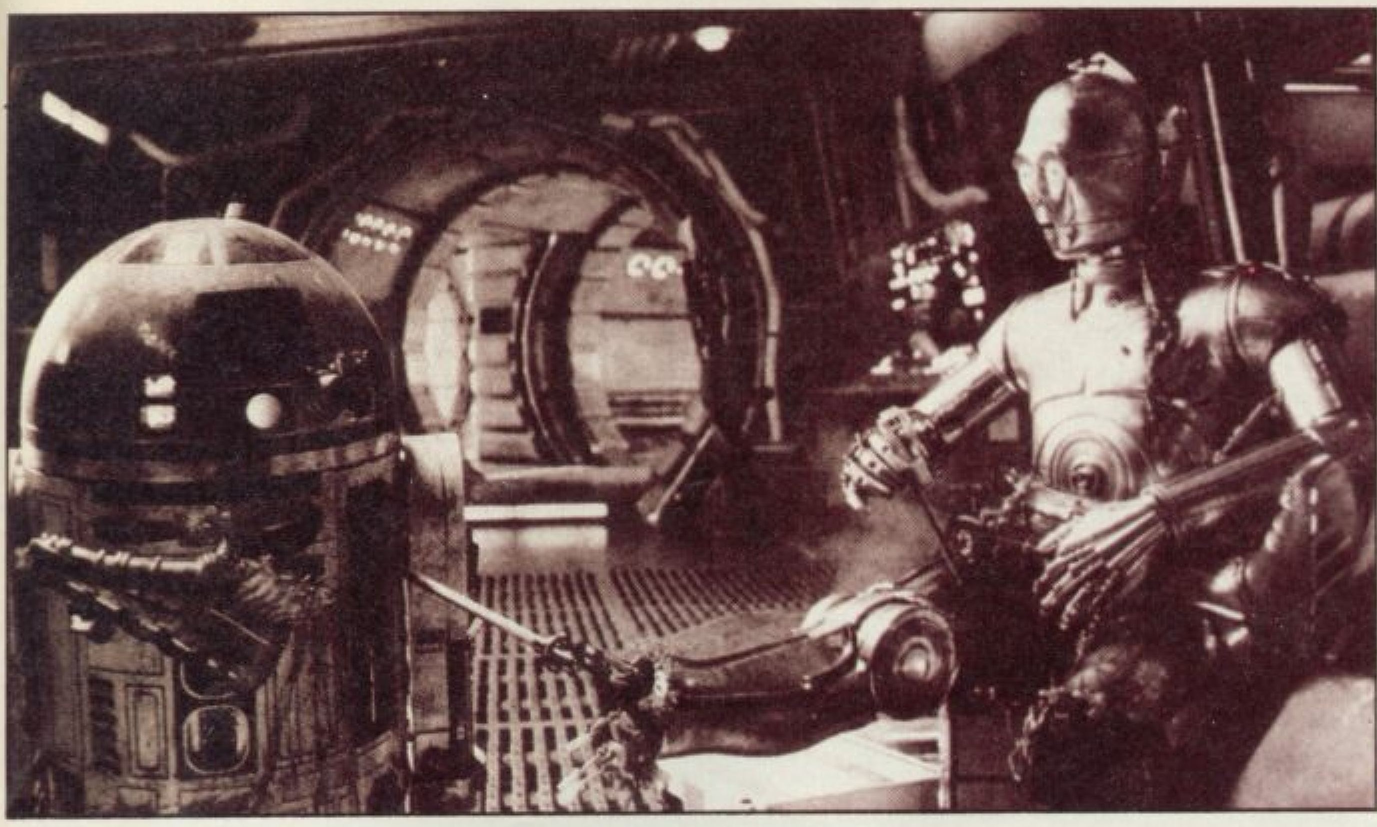
Events take a twist when he takes a young couple as lodgers after the death of his mother, and the boyfriend turns out to be a convicted criminal who can see the potential for Malcolm's robots to perform the perfect bank robbery.

Funny and slightly poignant by turns, at its funding stage the movie almost outdid the fiction of the plot when the producer actually sent one of the remote-controlled robots into a potential investor's office brandishing a gun and demanding a million Australian dollars. The man, suitably impressed, invested . . .

On a more sinister level, one of the cinema's first plausible murders by current robot technology came in Paul Schrader's *Blue Collar* (CIC Video). A tale of union corruption in Detroit and starring Harvey Keitel, Yaphet Kotto and Richard Pryor, the film features one character who crosses the bribed officials and is locked in the robot-staffed paint-spraying shop, asphyxiating as the automatic limbs spray the steel chassis.

Generally Hollywood has wanted its robots to be in 'human' form, ie two arms/legs/recognisable head, rather than the more plausible forms which will be a reality long before the anthropomorphised versions the film makers would like. Indeed the robots looked so human in *Sleeper* (Warner Home Video) that Woody Allen doubled for one by donning a silver carapace and sticking a funnel in his mouth!

For 'realism', designer Syd Mead, also responsible for the visuals in *Blade Runner* (Warner Home Video), went to Japan to study their current and future developments in the cybernetics line before designing



Many robots in movies are of a generally benevolent disposition.

Naturals for marketing opportunities, funny R2D2 and prissy C3PO

No. 5 for John Badham's *Short Circuit* (CBS/Fox Video), an entertaining tale in which a military attack robot is struck by lightning, scrambling its programming and turning it into a charming, witty character. No. 5 escapes from the Army and ends up in the protection of young Ally Sheedy, as scientist Steve Guttenberg and Fisher Stevens try to track it down before the military can seize it back.

No. 5 is a fully practical design on a tank-track base, and has an extendable head with two on-board video cameras for eyes. The special effects crew constructed some 16 different models, each capable of a different function, from ballroom dancing (honestly) to doing impressions of the Three Stooges! Following the box-office success, shooting is currently underway on *Short Circuit II*, with only Fisher Stevens from the original cast.

Interestingly the design of No. 5 is similar to that of Hector, the first of the 'Demi-God' series in the ITC production *Saturn 3* (Channel 5), an SF movie that deserved a far better reception than it received.

Harvey Keitel plays a deranged space pilot who travels to one of the moons of Saturn on which Kirk Douglas and Farrah Fawcett have set up a hydroponics base. Keitel brings with him Hector, a lumbering but highly skilled robot, controlled via a brain implant with Keitel.

But when jealousy for Ms Fawcett sends Keitel psychotic, it similarly upsets Hector, who turns on his creator – dismembering him and crating the remains in the same containers in which Hector was originally packed – and then lusting after said lady.

Design and script were both effective, but the film suffered from the original writer, designer and director, John Barry, dying after a few days shooting, to be replaced by Stanley Donen, a director more suited to musicals (!), and from Keitel refusing to dub his lines in post-production and being revoiced by Roy Dotrice. A great pity, since the movie shows some really effective writing and ideas.

Always ready to jump on a trend, veteran exploitation producer Roger Corman saw the potential in a reversal of *Short Circuit* and produced *Killbots*, the story of a shopping mall where the security robots go berserk after lightning hits the main control system. Thus the janitor and six teenagers who have stayed behind in a bed shop find themselves being hunted and killed by the uncontrollable mechanical guards.

Released in this country as *Chopping Mall* (Vestron Video), the movie is an effective little chiller, with enough black comedy to make it very palatable.

Many robots in movies are of a generally benevolent disposition, notably the giant Gort, helping his alien master Klaatu (Michael Rennie) spread the word of peace to an uncaring world in Robert Wise's *The Day The Earth Stood Still* (CBS/Fox) in 1956.

Recently the cause has been given a giant boost by the characters of C3PO and R2D2 in the Star Wars trilogy – *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return Of The Jedi* (all CBS/Fox). The personalities of these two – Anthony Daniels being wonderfully prissy as the fussy C3PO and Kenny Baker, splitting screen time with a purely radio-controlled version, in the R2D2 shell – made them winners, and naturals for marketing opportunities, as can be seen in the Star Wars merchandise, ranging from toys to bed spreads, lunch boxes, cosmetics and slippers.

Producer and director George Lucas included a number of other robot characters such as medics and background fillers, but realised the importance of the main robot pair, possibly more than any other characters, to the series.

A nice Star Wars joke comes in the SF send-up *Gremloids* (Showchannel), the movie which spawned the Lord Buckethead character who stood against Margaret Thatcher at the last General Election. In the movie an alien advances on an upright cylinder vacuum cleaner, believing it is a close relative of R2D2 and that it carries a recorded message from Princess Serena.

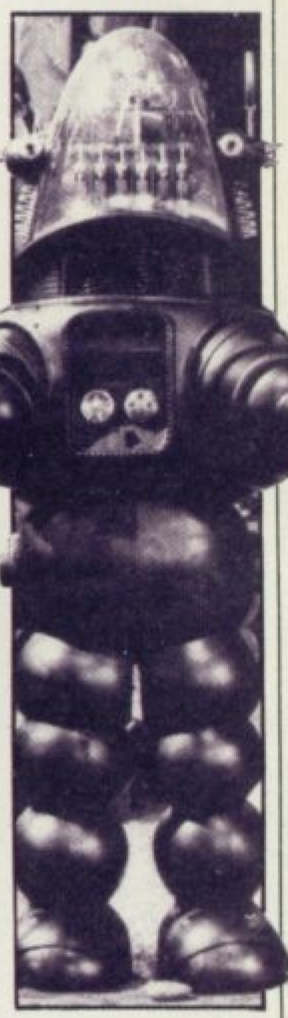
The importance of marketing nowadays can be easily seen in the number of Japanese-sourced animation series aimed at the children's market, and which are regarded as little more than promotional plugs for the large range of toys and character-supported merchandising behind them. Currently making parents part with their hard-earned cash to satisfy the material cravings of their sprogs, are tapes from *Transformers* (Video Gems) – first and most well-established of the robot range; The mighty *Orbots* (MGM/UA); and the *Gobots* (both Entertainment In Video and Vestron).

Often a robot will be the wise-cracking but resourceful sidekick of a dependable hero. The most famous is surely Robby The Robot, the all-purpose hero of the SF classic *Forbidden Planet* (MGM/UA) – the movie being based on Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, amazingly – with Walter Pidgeon as the despot.

An enduring figure, Robby has also made cameo appearances in both Joe Dante's *Hollywood Boulevard* (a send-up of low-budget film making) and *Gremlins* (both warner Home Video). Obviously Dante is trying single-handed to revive Robby's career.

Jesse Vint also had a robot companion in the staggeringly tasteless but entertaining Roger Corman production *Forbidden World* (Embassy), a low-budget gem with some excellent special effects made with few bucks and less taste, while a tin drum called Jinks was responsible for launching a space shuttle full of teenagers into space instead of it just being a simulation in *Space Camp* (CBS/Fox).

One of the most effective teamings of man and robot came with the dreadfully underrated Douglas Trumbull 1971 movie *Silent Running* (CIC), a committed ecological SF film in which the Earth's last growing plants and gardens are orbiting in large space freighters. When the decision from Earth to destroy them – for budgetary reasons – comes through, crewmen Freeman Lowell (Bruce Dern) rebels, killing the other crew members and absconding with his gardens into deep space. Very moving in parts.



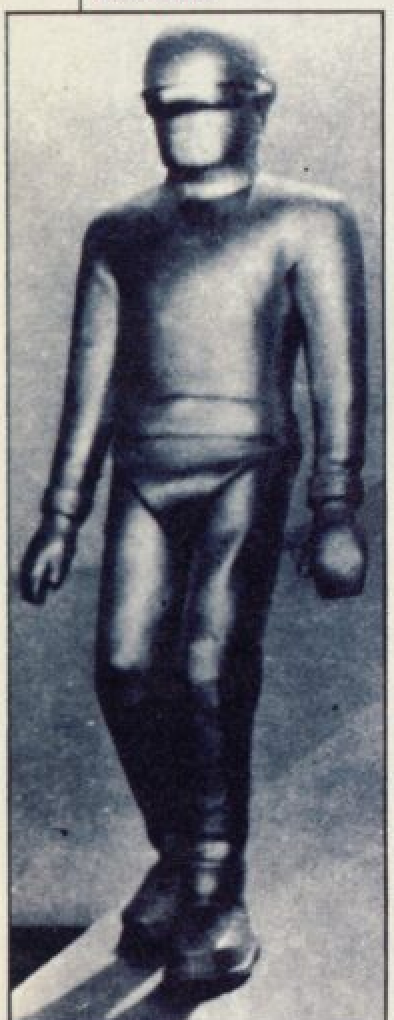
Robby the Robot, all-purpose hero of Forbidden Planet

Huey, Dewie and Louie were played by young amputees, who could fit into the confined shell and operate them from within.

PRESS ANY KEY



Animated action from Transformers



The giant Gort, helpful alien robot

. . . the robot presence in *Flesh Gordon* was comprised of large dustbins on legs with whizzing, phallic drill-bits amidships . . .

The robots, here, Huey, Dewie and Louie, were squat, box-shaped items and almost certainly the inspiration for R2D2 several years later. Highly convincing, they were played by young amputees who could fit into the confined shell and operate them from within. Highly recommended for anyone with an interest in intelligent SF.

Disappointing was the highly touted *Lorca And The Outlaws* (Polygram Video), which also went through the titles *2084*, *The Outlaws And The Starship Redwing* and *Blood Storm*. The only real point of interest in this depressingly flat story was midget actor Deep Roy in an almost kabuki-like costume as the hero's robot assistant, like a more stylish version of Buck Rogers' Twikki in *Buck Rogers In The 23rd Century* (CIC). This was a passable updating of the old Alex Raymond character with Gil Gerard in athletic form as the hero, although our sympathies go to midget actor Felix Silla for acting in what looks a very uncomfortable costume.

Buck Rogers ended up as a TV series after the pilot episode, and television has provided a few interesting entries in the robot line. From the Sixties came the robot in *Lost In Space*, while the prolific Gerry Anderson had the transparent Robert The Robot (where have we heard that before?) in *Fireball XL5*. More recently *Terrahawks* (several available on the low-priced Channel 5 label) gave us both heroes and villains, the goodies being the Zeroids, spherical defenders of the Earth under the command of Sergeant-Major Zero (aptly voiced by Windsor Davies). Their Martian opponents were ugly looking cubes with grimaces, all the better for the programme's end graphics which had the two sides in noughts-and-crosses confrontation.

Dr Who also showed both sides of robot loyalty, having an assistant for several seasons in the form of the robotic dog K9, while taking on mechanical monsters. Most memorable among the list of villains were the Yeti, which proved to have large mechanical balls under all the fur, the Mummies in the *Pyramids Of Mars* (BBC Video), and the implausible Giant Robot, a seemingly ordinary creation which, somehow, grew to enormous proportions. Quite how wasn't explained. And before you cry 'Gotcha!' – the Daleks weren't robots!

Whatever one might think of the rest of the series, the TV version of Douglas Adams' *The Hitch Hiker's Guide To The Galaxy* made a delightful job of Marvin The Paranoid Android, a bit of a misnomer since he was anything but human in form. Voiced by Stephen Moore, Marvin was one of the few aspects of the radio serial which fulfilled expectations when transferred to the TV screen.

Incidentally, the prospects of a film version of the series are still very much alive under the direction of *Ghostbusters* producer and director Ivan Reitman, even though he has rejected Adams's own screenplay. Apparently what Reitman objected to were some of the major characters and incidents which made the original series so successful. As Adams himself said: 'It's like asking for chocolate chip ice-cream and then complaining about the little black bits . . . '

Robot villains have been favourites in the cinema for a long time, Disney finally entering the field with their big budget *The Black Hole* (Walt Disney Home Video) in 1978. Baddie Maximillian Schell had a large red item with a variety of blades to see off the goodies, led by Robert Forster, as well as an army of robot sharp-shooters. The good guys weren't helped by a know-all robot with the voice of Roddy McDowell on their side.

One interesting point was that the robots here floated by some form of anti-gravity system, or rather by the barely disguised wires on the set. Not exactly technically correct, but what can you expect from a script which has the heroes venturing outside the spacecraft without protective clothing after a meteorite has crashed through it?!

Japan has had a range of robot villains in its SF movies, beginning with the aliens *The Mysterians* in 1957. In their monster series which has given us such creatures as Mothra, a giant moth; Rodan, a giant flying turkey with sparks coming out of its bum and Godzilla, a giant – er – thing, came *Godzilla Vs The Cosmic Monster* (Hokushin) which had the monster battling Mecha-Godzilla, a Meccano-style version of itself. Similarly King Kong was revived to fight a Mecha-Kong a few years later in *King Kong Escapes*.

The Cylons in *Battlestar Galactica*, *The Cylon Attack* and *Conquest Of The Earth* (all CIC) were metallic warriors, determined to give the crew of the Battlestar Galactica a hard time, while the robot presence in pornographic spoof *Flesh Gordon* (Hokushin) was comprised of large dustbins on legs with whizzing, phallic drill-bits amidships . . .

One of the best realised visions of the believable robot-utilising future comes in Michael Crichton's *Runaway* (RCA/Columbia). Crichton, who as an author has given us credible predictions of things to come with such books as *The Andromeda Strain* and *Sphere*, shows us robots as domestic slaves, routinely doing housework and tending kids. But the robots are prone to 'runaways' – individual units which become uncontrollable, turning on humans. That's where cop Jack Ramsey (Tom Selleck) comes in, to deactivate them.

Villainy comes in the form of Luther (Gene Simmonds from the rock band KISS and more recently the terrorist leader in New World's *Wanted – Dead Or Alive*), a genius who plans to sell rogue chips to the underworld which will turn ordinary robots into killing machines.

Chrichton's future is mid-tech, the technology being taken for granted, although he elaborates with a couple of touches such as smartbullets (small missiles programmed to a certain person's heat patterns and which will chase them around corners) and vicious spider-like robots, spraying acid from syringes. A very effective and entertaining movie.

Certainly one of the most interesting concepts involving robots in the cinema came with *Star Trek – The Motion Picture* (CIC), the first in the TV spin-off series which has improved as it has continued.

The Earth is menaced by an entity called V'ger, and the crew of the Starship Enterprise investigate. After a ponderous middle section, V'ger turns out to be a Voyager space probe, missing for many years and discovered by a robotic race who realised it was lost, so assembled a craft for it and sent it home . . .

But of all the robots in the history of the cinema, pride of place must go to the villain of *Robot Monster* (Barry Wiles Video).

The movie (as seen on *The Worst Of Hollywood*) was rather low on funds, so Ro-Man, the robot monster, is a man in a gorilla suit with a diving helmet on his head . . . we kid you not . . .



Not a plant but a special effects robot, from Little Shop Of Horrors



One of John Buchler's Ghoulies goes for the throat in Ghoulies II

ROBO SPECIAL EFFECTS

. . . the producer actually sent a remote-controlled robot to a potential investor brandishing a gun and demanding a million Australian dollars.

Robot villains have been favourites in the cinema for a long time.

As with so much in the film SFX (special effects) field, robotics and cybernetics are being increasingly used in fantasy, SF and horror movies to create bizarre Earth creatures and aliens, as well as some of the more extreme scenes of horror and mutation.

Many SFX technicians are now coming to the field with qualifications in mechanics, engineering and cybernetics rather than make-up kit and enthusiasm.

One of the first robotics SFX in a major movie was 'Bruce', the name given to the robotic shark in Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (CIC). Constructed by veteran Robert Mattey, the shark looked relatively convincing mostly because of the brief glimpses of it through Spielberg's teasing editing. It was certainly less convincing when seen for longer periods in the sequels *Jaws 2*, *Jaws 3* and *Jaws – The Revenge* (all CIC).

Spielberg in his role as producer also reverted to robotic fabrication for the most part for the creation of the *Gremlins* (Warner Home Video) in Joe Dante's film of the same name. Amusing and horrific by turns, the vicious creatures of the title were superbly produced by Chris Walas, also responsible for the final stages of the transformation in David Cronenberg's *The Fly* (CBS/Fox).

Success leads to imitation, inevitably, and soon independent producer Charles Band had *Ghoulies* (Entertainment In Video) on the stocks, a similar tale of malevolent beasties being raised by a sorcerer. The creatures here were dreadfully unconvincing, both in appearance (high-gloss plastic sheen) and movement, problems which effects man John Buchler certainly improved upon in the recent sequel *Ghoulies 2* (Entertainment In Video).

The fantasy and horror movie is the field where SFX are generally needed, excusing the odd family film such as Disney's *Baby – Secret Of The Lost Legend* (Touchstone Video), in which the star was an animatronic baby dinosaur found by two scientists in the jungle. The creature was as unbelievable as the story. Similarly Hugh Hudson's Tarzan story *Greystoke* (Warner Home Video), had animatronic apes and facial masks for actors in ape suits.

Various ends to which robotics have been used in horror films include the transformation of people into snarling demons in *Demons* and *Demons 2* (both Avatar), in which Sergio Stivaletti used articulated model heads for scenes such as teeth being pushed from gums by emergent fangs, and *Hellraiser* (New World), where Bob Keen's crew had such duties as the reformation of a rotting corpse revived by blood and, come the ending, both a man being entirely ripped apart by meat hooks and a winged beastie which seems to have little relevance to the rest of the movie. Still, it looks good.

It was robotics which allowed actor Stephen Rae to tear off his own face (with the aid of technician Christopher Tucker) and join *The Company Wolves* (Vestron), while John Caglione turned to technology to create the effects for the curiously named *C.H.U.D.* (Medusa), a tale of toxic waste turning tramps into cannibal monsters. Quite recommended because of its imaginative treatment.

On a less gruesome level, Nick Maley turned actor Bernard Bresslaw into a very convincing Cyclops through a remote-controlled device with a realistic blinking central eye in the fantasy *Krull* (RCA/Columbia), while the problems in getting a twelve foot high, many-tentacled alien plant with a thirst for blood to lip-synch for a song by Levi Stubbs of The Four Tops caused many millions of dollars and many weeks to be added to the budget and schedule of *The Little Shop Of Horrors* (Warner Home Video).

Actually the persistance paid off, and the SFX team, headed by Muppet crew member Lyle Conway, produced some superbly entertaining scenes in this very amusing horror/comedy/musical.

As in any field there are experts, probably the master of whom is Italián Carlo Rambaldi. Initially experimenting with robotics to create bats for *Nightwing* (RCA/Columbia), he was then hired for a full-sized 45-foot robot for the Dino De Laurentiis remake of *King Kong* (Thorn EMI) in 1976. Eventually his creation, which was articulated in the arms, head and face, was used for only a few seconds, substituting make-up man Rick Baker in a gorilla suit for most of the movie. Unfortunately Rambaldi's contributions to the 1987 sequel, *King Kong Lies!* (CBS/Fox), have fared little better, the film dying swiftly at the US box-office.

Luckily Rambaldi has had more success with creating the mechanical heads of Ridley Scott's *Alien* (CBS/Fox), *E.T.* and *Silver Bullet* (Cannon Video), taken from a Stephen King werewolf story. Although looking slightly bear-like, his werewolf transformations are well-shot and lit.

Other luminaries in the field include Rob Bottin – who turned actors into werewolves for *The Howling* (Channel 5) and let his imagination run riot creating the alien multi-shape-shifter in John Carpenter's *The Thing* (CIC) – and Tom Savini, an SFX man whose work veers towards the very gory. Excellent examples of Savini's work with mechanicals and robotics come with the rotting crypt-keeper in the opening segments of George Romero's *Creepshow* (Mastervision) and the remarkable opening sequence of Romero's *Day Of The Dead* (Entertainment In Video).

Of the movie, Savini himself said: 'We open on the the zombie shuffling down the road and it's obviously an actor. Then we pan around to see it from the front and cut in the model, and then audiences know it's not an actor.'

Quite, since the creature has no jaw below its top teeth and has its tongue and vocal chords hanging down the front of its shirt!

The crew nicknamed it 'Dr.Tongue' . . .

But technology can be abused, rarely more so than in *Rawhead Rex* (Vestron), a ludicrous horror movie set in Ireland where the Rawhead of the title is a revived deity worshipped by Druids.

Constructed by Coast to Coast Effects, also responsible for *Max Headroom*, the seven-foot-plus beast is technically fine but aesthetically terrible, unnaturally shiny and with rotating segmented LEDs for eyes. Add the fact that the cable-controlled head goes through all the combination of expression in close-up in almost every scene, and you realise that this is one for collectors of really terrible movies . . .


1 ITS THE 4TH JULY AND THE NATION IS SET FOR AN ALMIGHTY CELEBRATION.
2 INTO THE COMPARENT CALM OF THE WHITE HOUSE BURSTS THE MANIC DR. MEGALOMANN. "STEP DOWN MR PRESIDENT, SUBMIT TO MY RULE OR TODAY AMERICA WILL KNOW A PLAGUE FROM WHICH DEATH WILL SEEM A HAPPY RELEASE".
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TOWARDS THE TAPELESS STUDIO



In the last issue, micro-chip musician Jon Bates gave a brief overview of home micro music. Now, to go a step further along the road towards the tapeless music studio, Jon puts what is possible with home computers into perspective by leaping first to the top of the chip pile and dissecting the Fairlight Computer Music Instrument – the machine against which all other musical micros must measure themselves.

About ten years ago a trio of Australian computer designers were watching the Sydney harbour hydrofoil skim across the water – they liked its name and called their product after it. And the rest, as they say, is history – but it is also the present and the future.

When reviewing music software it is a great temptation to use the Fairlight CMI as a yardstick to hold against other synths and software. It is such a universal music concept that all other software adopts only parts of its resources.

Not that you are likely to rush out and buy one at over £100,000 for the top of the range. Point being that an overview of the Everest of computer synths will give us an inkling of what we should expect from our music software and in some cases how the software developed from areas covered by the Fairlight.

The Fairlight was conceived in about 1970 when an Australian, Kim Ryrie, started an Electronics projects magazine. One of them was for a synthesizer and he saw a future in developing it a bit further. An old schoolfriend, Peter Vogel, a dab hand at electronics, was called in to foster the idea. Things didn't go too well until about 1975 when they met up with a computer consultant called Tony Furse who had been working in the States on manipulating sound waveforms by digital means. The prototype system was ready in about 1977 but it was slow and very expensive. A rethink using the faster and then novel RAM chips meant they had more speed and memory at their disposal; which in turn opened the doors to sound sampling. Still two years away from the final launch date, they needed to eat and so diverted their time into producing an Electronic Video Paintbox for TV stations to finance their operations: they also produced the hardware for Remington Office Machines.

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

The Series 1 CMI featured sound sampling and sample manipulation, the original sound synthesis formula taking a bit of a back seat. It made its first appearance at an American trade show in 1979 where, oddly enough, it was considered a clever but not very useful machine.

As interest slowly picked up so the software was updated. The theory being that a Fairlight shouldn't go out of date and neither should it be recognisable by any one sound – in practice that doesn't quite work, but it has been possible to buy additional upgrades to both hardware and software.

The Fairlight is unusual in that it has always used at least two microprocessors in a dual processing mode; one works on information exchange with the user and the other one controls the hardware. It usually uses dual floppy disks with, nowadays, a hard disk option. The software on the Series 2 took up over 300K of memory space which was improved on by using the higher level C language and greater hardware memory.

WHAT YOU GET

Although now available in three separate packages and price brackets, your essential Fairlight as it drops onto your kitchen table will consist of one (or two) six-octave velocity-sensing keyboard, a green-and-black super high-resolution VDU, the main CPUs and voice modules and one or two disk drives depending on your budget. The VDU is fitted out with a lightpen to speed things up and which gives you the option of redrawing the various waveforms displayed.

Contributing to the expense of the Fairlight are the specifications for the hardware and power supply which have been deliberately overated so that it can function in live situations where the power could be less than perfect.

On arrival the Fairlight's memory is empty. It comes with prerecorded library disks of sounds but the intention is that there is not a typical Fairlight sound. Commands to the software are issued through an alpha-numeric keyboard or via the lightpen (much quicker). In practice most users build up their own sound library, usually by sampling. It has sockets on the back to accept sound from a microphone, mixer or virtually any other device with sophisticated A to D converters to change the electrical impulses into digital information. Surprisingly, MIDI was a late addition to its armoury.

Having connected it all together, load up the system disk, which pulls the program up in chunks, and you get the main menu from which all the other options may be accessed. Each option is called a Page. Without getting too technical I will now take you on a conducted tour of the pages! There are copious help pages. In fact

It is surprising to learn that early CMIs only had 8-bit sampling. This is the same as a Spectrum!

It is such a universal music concept that all other software adopts only parts of its resources.

the entire user manual is contained on the system disk, and you can flip backwards or forwards through it, locate a previously used page and even enter commands with the relevant help page on-screen. There is also a help page for the help page . . . !

PAGING MUSIC

PAGE 1
The main index – easy!

PAGE 2
Disk control: this manages all user-created files for voices, sequences, waveforms, samples, control information, and screen print-out via disk. Back up files can be created and unwanted files deleted. A running Free Space count gives you an idea of how much you have to play with.

PAGE 3
Keyboard Control: the Fairlight runs to eight or 16-note polyhony. This page tunes the keyboard to your liking over a range of several octaves and can include odd tunings, types of scale etc. It lets you divide the keyboard up so you can have different voices in different areas. If you have two keyboards you have more possibilities. The configurations can be stored for future use (Instrument File) – very handy for live performance.

PAGE 4
Additive Synthesis: the Fairlight can also create original sounds by a variety of methods. The best known of these is the additive harmonic principle, known as Fourier Transforms. This reduces all sounds to a series of sine wave components and builds up the sound a layer at a time. However by using the lightpen the actual shape of either the harmonic content of the wave or the overall sound envelope can be drawn onto the screen thus making a completely interactive and rapid form of synthesis. The displays, like all wave displays, are accessed from page D.

PAGE 5
An alternative method for sound creation is contained on page five: Waveform Generation. In effect pages four and five deal with the same information but present it in different ways. A graphic representation of 32 'faders', rather like a graphic equaliser, is displayed. Each fader represents a harmonic in sound and when a sound is loaded the harmonic levels are shown on the graphic. These can be juggled around on a scale of 0 - 255 to emphasise or de-emphasise any of the harmonics – thus creating a new harmonic contour. However since each sound can be chopped into 128 segments you can redraw the contours for each segment. In this way very complex changing sounds can be made without the need for additional filtering. Once a satisfactory result is obtained it can be saved to the main voice file.

PAGE 6
Waveform Design: waveforms are put directly into memory by drawing them with the lightpen on the screen. You can even do this by putting dots at various points and the CMI will join them up for you. The advantage is that the harmonics are automatically computed and added – the Fairlight guessing what is required and merging the results.

PAGE 7
Control Page: it allows the user to specify the peripherals of each voice; sustain, level, filtering, attack, vibrato, depth, glissando etc, rather like an analog synth. In fact there are 17 different parameters that can be controlled. Each voice is given its own unique control setting, stored on a separate file but pulled back whenever that voice is loaded. From the controls on the keyboard or by foot pedals these can be adjusted in real time during a performance. Thanks to the multi-processor design it is able to do this whilst playing back sequences. From this page, and in association with pages four and five, looping points can be decided on and any of the 128 segments can be made as a start and end point. Voices are thus stretched or made continuous.

PAGE 8
Sampling – the infamous part of the Fairlight: it is awkward for me to quote memory and sample rates as there are several different upgrades that give different memory and hence sampling capacities. There are all the usual facilities here; sample rate, trigger level, editing, looping, and the visual display which is summoned up by Page D. It is surprising to learn that early CMIs only had 8-bit sampling. This is the same as a Spectrum! Most samplers are 12- or 16-bit nowadays, so how was the Fairlight so good and noiseless?

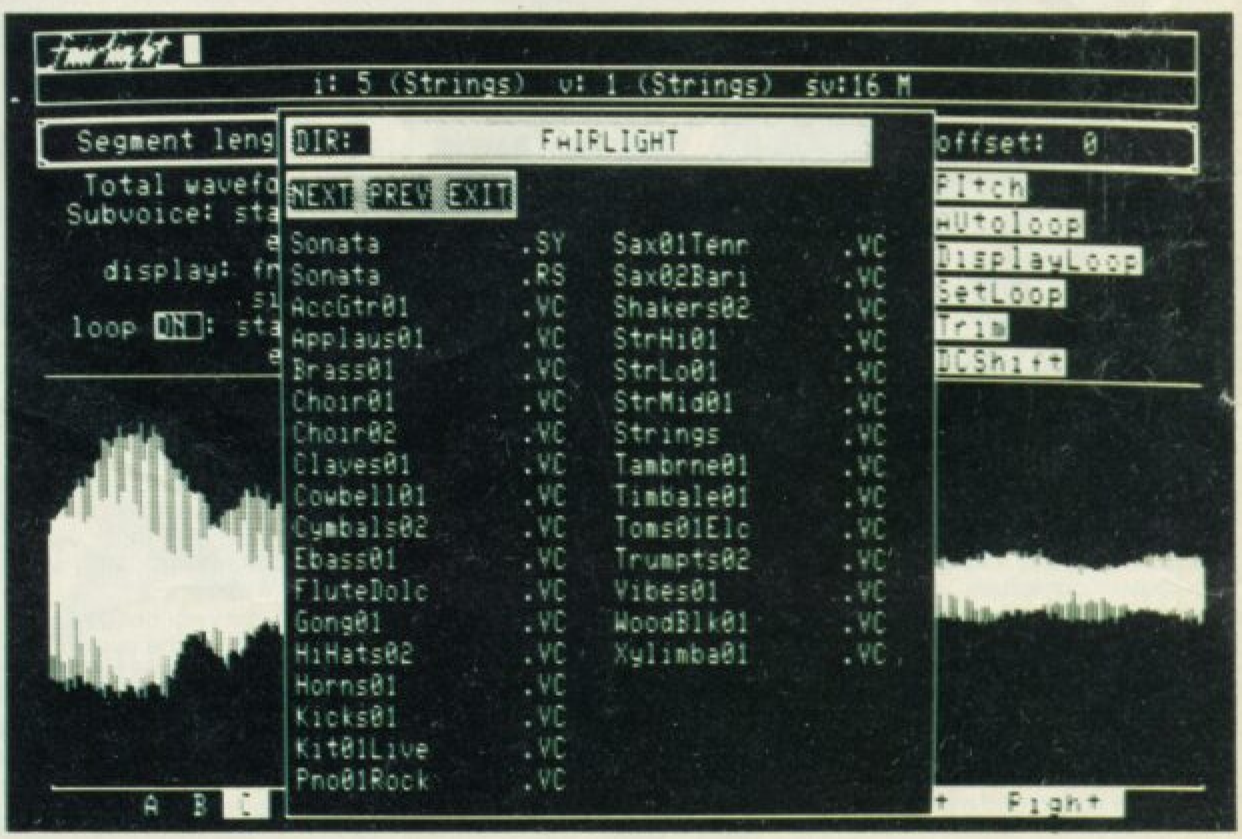
Excellent digital filtering controlled the bandwidth, the D to A converters were (and still are) a non-linear system that is software controlled and allows more code to be generated for soft sounds – the peak of any input generates the maximum code possible and reduces the chance of noise being introduced. This coupled with hardware sound compression and expansion allowed a dynamic range of 70db where only 48db was originally possible. Distortion is more likely to come from the input system or output amplification than the CMI itself.

The user specifies the sampling rate to be used with the aid of the help page and sets the peripherals for the hi- and low-pass filters plus the level of the trigger impulse and, maybe if you are using tape or CD, a microsecond delay before the sampling starts. After sampling the sound a graphic display of the waveform tells the user if the fine details of the sample are correct and allows you to edit with lightpen. After editing the user may recall page two – File Control – and save the voice to disk. Any instrument changes harmonically at different pitches. A sampler is not so clever and although it raises or lowers the pitch according to the note played it does not alter the harmonic content. So to reproduce, say, an acoustic piano across the keyboard requires several samples which are cross-faded into one another.

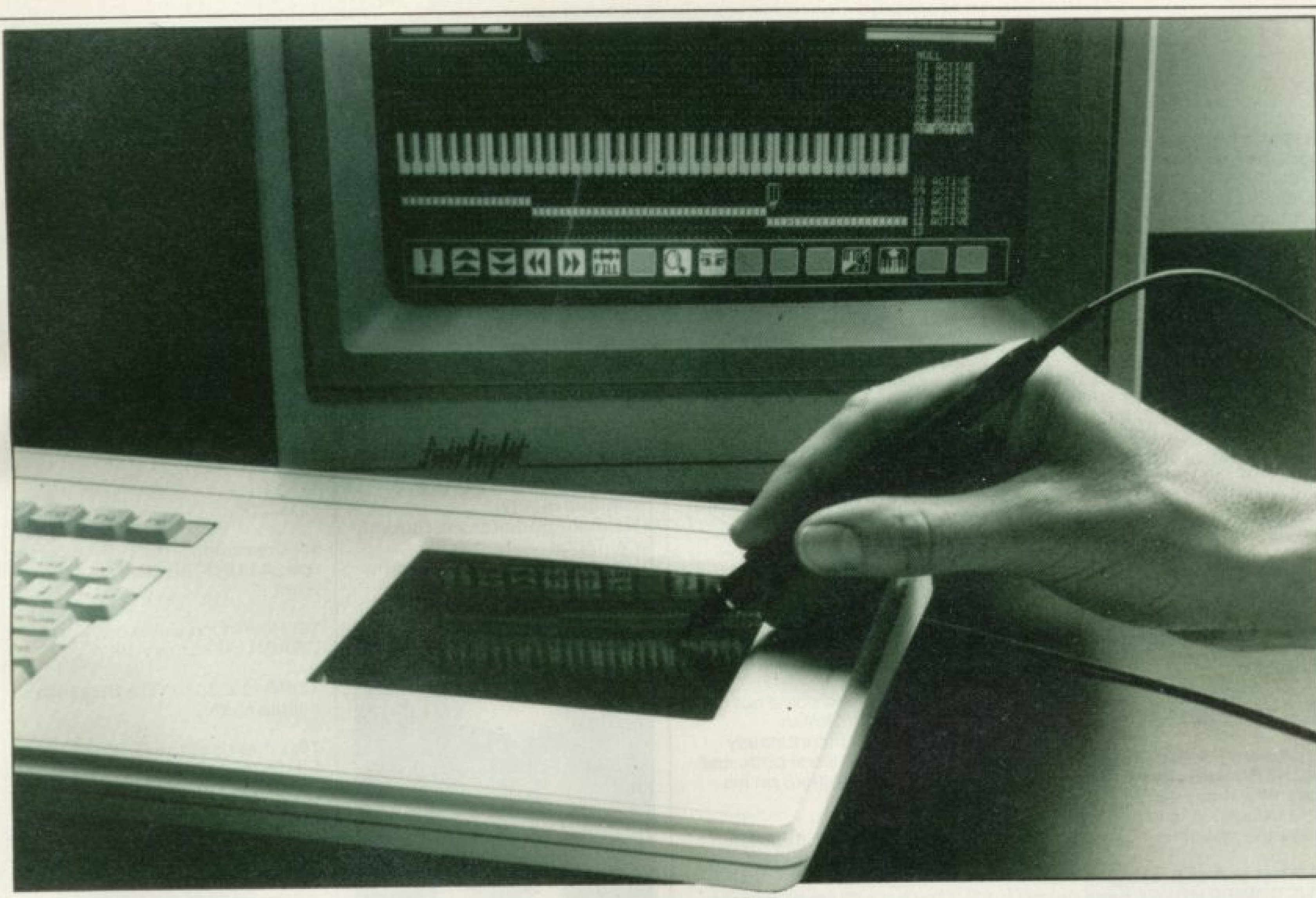
PAGE 9
Sequencer: it is programmed by playing the music in real-time and records all sorts of information that you would expect: the length is limited by the amount of space left on the disk and with the addition of hard disks the sky could well be the limit. On the Series 2 it could only record eight separate parts. Page 9 requires control decisions to be input such as file/sequence name and playback speed. Parts using the same voice can be merged. This is very similar in performance to the MIDI recorders that are now available for most computers.

PAGE L
Library: this allows the updating of

. . . by using the lightpen the actual shape of either the harmonic content of the wave or the overall sound envelope can be drawn onto the screen . . .



The standard, and extensive, onboard library of high fidelity sounds

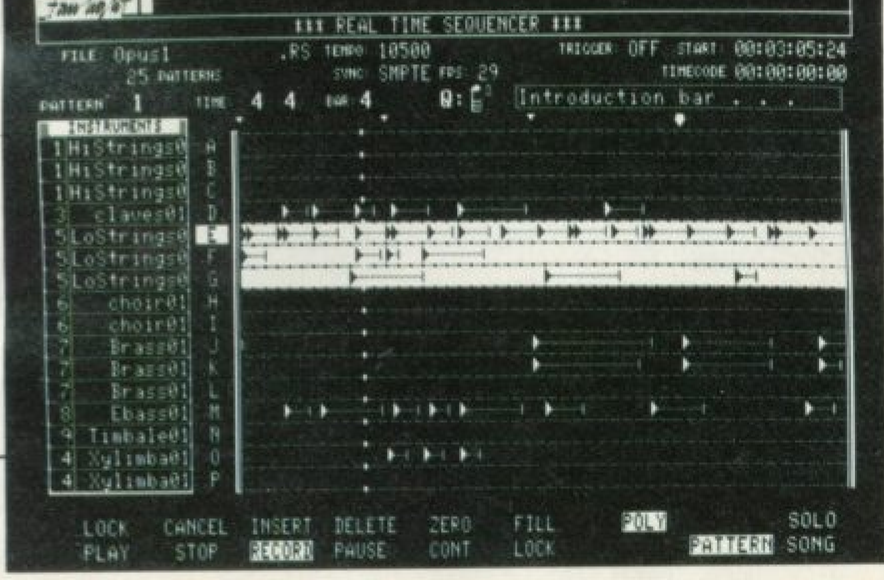


With the Fairlight, a light-pen eradicates much keyboard work

files, on voices, controls, sequences etc.

PAGE C
Page C loads the Music Composition Language. This is the step-time writing page and has been developed for exact writing, and like all good step-writing programs it is meticulous and at first a bit tedious. It is menu-driven throughout and peripherals such as note values and barlengths can be defined. It works on the familiar principle of creating sequences that can be made into 'parts' and these finally go towards forming the 'piece'. Notes, rests, velocity, voice, octaves etc, can be defined for each note and it is written rather in the manner of program with up to eight lines being written and running simultaneously.

PAGE R
Perhaps the most often used page for music compositions. This was originally written with rhythm patterns in mind and was modelled on the Linn Drum machine pattern writing. The user plays notes in real time which appear as notation on-screen. Adding another few bars to this builds up a sequence. Instruments can be added to this, polyphonically. Up to 250 different patterns can be written and then assembled (chained), any eight patterns can also be linked up to form 26 separate sections (A to Z) and patterns and sections can be mixed together to create a complete piece. The Fairlight corrects any timing inaccuracies by quantization commands although it is often more human to leave in slight inaccuracies to give the music 'feel'. The corrections can be done with the lightpen, moving notes about and changing dynamic levels as required – it is very impressive and very fast to work with. All patterns and sections can be stored away for future use and can be converted to the composition page if you want to do some editing in this mode.



The real-time sequencer which with SMPTE (time coding)

it is often more human to leave in slight inaccuracies to give the music 'feel'.

PAGE D
As mentioned before, this is the display page used in conjunction with any of the other pages needing waveform display.

ON THE HOME FRONT

Writing about the Fairlight is not an easy task: because there are many upgrades and additions you can make, it is possible to miss out features or find that only some of them use a particular page. For example there are about 50 of the new Series 3 in the country but some of these are actually upgraded Series 2 CMIs – Fairlight were not keen to give too much away about the series 3; in fact I couldn't get any screen shots of it at all.

All the photographs you see are from the Series 2. But what the CMI does today the 16-bit computer does at home tomorrow, as we shall see. Although most of us will never afford such an instrument we can use programs that emulate some of its features.

If you would like to have a go on a Fairlight, there are one or two Universities that open their doors at weekends to the likes of you and me, and companies such as Gateway offer one- or three-day instructional courses (Gateway can be reached on **(01) 350 0340**).

In the next issue of THE GAMES MACHINE, Jon will be reviewing some 'available' hardware and software, offering some advice on setting up at home, and taking a look at the tapeless music studio.

UNCLE MEL'S TRIVIA QUIZ

Apart from the fact that it earns that well-known computer charity, Mel Croucher, another few column centimetres to help pay for the mortgage on his new satellite TV station, and it also fills that most difficult of magazine pages – the last one – with something entertaining, there's not much point to this regular quiz. But if you get more than 17 questions out of 20 right, consider yourself a Person Renowned In Computer Knowledge . . .

1) Which of these titles is a genuine computer game?
a Attack Of The Mushroom People
b Attack Of The Killer Tomatoes
c Attack Of The Mutant Camels

2) Spell PIRAHNA, THALAMAS, AUTAMATO correctly, and say what these software houses were named after.

3) True or false:
a Virgin's NICK ALEXANDER is the nephew of former Tory Minister NORMAN ST. JOHN-STEVAS
b Domark's DOMINIC WHEATLEY is the grandson of black-magic author DENIS WHEATLEY
c Activision's ROD COUSENS is a Chinaman

4) Who recorded ***Computer Love*** in 1981, and ***Computer Love (Part 1)*** in 1986?

5) How many surrealists does it take to program a computer?

6) Who are **STEVE GOLD** and **BOB SCHIFREEN**?

7) Who are **DAVID DARLING** and **RICHARD DARLING**, how old are they, how many games have they sold worldwide, and don't they make the rest of us look pathetic?

8) What sort of packaging has THE POWER HOUSE been using for direct sales of *Soft And Cuddly*?
a a blindfold
b nylon pantyhose
c a sick bag

9) Who is the boss of KONAMI?
a Dolores Del Rio
b Leonardo Da Vinci
c Luther De Gale

10) How long was Jeff Minter's hair at 12 noon on October 1st 1987?
a 13½ inches, and can you find my Walkman for me
b 23½ inches, and come out of there with my Walkman
c Mr Minter has unfortunately been totally bald since birth, and wears Bonnie Langford on his head

11) What do the first three letters of **AMSTRAD** stand for?

12) What have Quicksilva got in common with **PAULA YATES** and **JOOLS HOLLAND**?

13) Who does THE GAMES MACHINE's Advertising Manager ROGER BENNETT resemble most?
a Norman (get that crucifix outa my face) Tebbit
b Valerie (eez a boy's nem een Frunce, rilly) Giscard D'Estaing
c Ming the Merciless



14) Who is this well-known chappie?
a former Lord Chancellor Hailsham
b The Gremlin gremlin
c Mr Spock washing his hear



15) Unscramble these beat-'em-ups: A FUNKIER GUY, I CUT A HAM

16) How much was a copy of **CRASH** in February 1984?

17) What is Conan The Barbarian's middle name?

18) What does **L.E.D.**, **L.Q.D.** and **E.L.O.** mean?

19) What same role have Yul Brynner, Brigitte Helm, Ian Holm, Patricia Roc and Rutger Hauer, played?

20) Okay smartypants, name the films in which they played it

ANSWERS

1) All of them
2) PIRANHA, after a fish. THALAMUS, after a part of the brain. AUTOMATA, after closing time
3) All true, (whatever happened to the British Empire in China?)
4) Kraftwerk (and it got to Number 36), and ZZAP (reaching the highly appropriate Number 64 in the charts!)
5) A banana
6) The celebrated hackers who got into the Duke of Edinburgh's Prestel Mailbox
7) Codemasters, 19 and 21, 1½ million, YES
8) c – a sick bag
9) c – Luther de Gale
10) b – can't find the Walkman but I've located the parting
11) Alan **M**ichael **S**ugar, who stands for no nonsense
12) *The Tube*
13) c – Ming The Merciless, the other two are not real people
14) Any of these
15) *Yie Ar Kung Fu, Uchi Mata*
16) 75 pee
17) THE
18) Light Emitting Diode, Liquid Crystal Display, A Bunch Of Old Posers
19) A Robot
20) *Westworld / Futureworld, Metropolis, Alien, The Perfect Woman, Bladerunner*

NEXT (AND LAST) BI-MONTH

Now that you've been satiated by Issue Two of THE GAMES MACHINE, and hopefully have that same warm snuggly feeling that you get after a good meal, it should be said that it is time to gird your loins and ready yourself for the next point of ecstacy in your life . . . and that's THE GAMES MACHINE Issue Three, which goes on sale from 21 January 1988.

- Firstly, next month will be filled to overflowing with informative and revealing reviews of games for both 8-bit and 16-bit machines (and 32-bit if anyone comes out with another game for the Archimedes).
- Martyn Lester and Martin Coxhead follow on from this issue's Robots In Video with a synthetic look at **Cyborgs And Androids** (if we can squeeze them in between all the reviews).
- Getting out the linseed and turps, Robin Candy will be doing another spot of pixel pointillism with **Deluxe Paint II** from Electronic Arts.
- Reviews for both 16-bit and 8-bit games will feature heavily with our usual critical, no holds bar'd, in-depth criticism.
- If the force is with us we should bring you, courtesy of Domark, a fully fledged review of **Star Wars** the computer game.
- Firebird look set to change the laws of physics and actually beam Atari ST versions of their better-late-than-never **Star Trek** experience into our hands too. Has the delay and hype been worth it? We'll see.
- If the reviews for both 8-bit and 16-bit games don't take up all the room then we shall be presenting a feature on **Censorship**. John Gilbert interviews horror author, **Sean Hudson**, on his views of this subject and talks to the retail chain stores to glean their opinions on what they feel should and shouldn't be censored. He also looks at the differences between the UK, the US, France and Germany and why one country may censor that which another wouldn't.
- And then of course all the usuals will be in Issue Three, **Role Playing** with John Woods, **Adventure** with Rob Steel, **Competitions**, **Music** from John Bates and **Mel Croucher** from . . . Mel Croucher.
- Plus some games review for both 8-bit and 16-bit machines . . .

ISSUE THREE IS ON SALE FROM 21 JANUARY,
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